The Animation Fan's Magazine • Number Twenty-One • $3.25

ANIMATO!

STEPPING INTO THE PICTURE

An Interview With Maurice Noble

Chuck Jones's Master Designer on What's Opera, Doc?, Disney, Today's Cartoons, and the Art of Animation Design

Plus: TINY TOON ADVENTURES: A Critical Guide • Disney's THE RESCUERS DOWN UNDER • Remembering GRIM NATWICK • Streamline Pictures's ZILLION • News, Reviews, and Much More!

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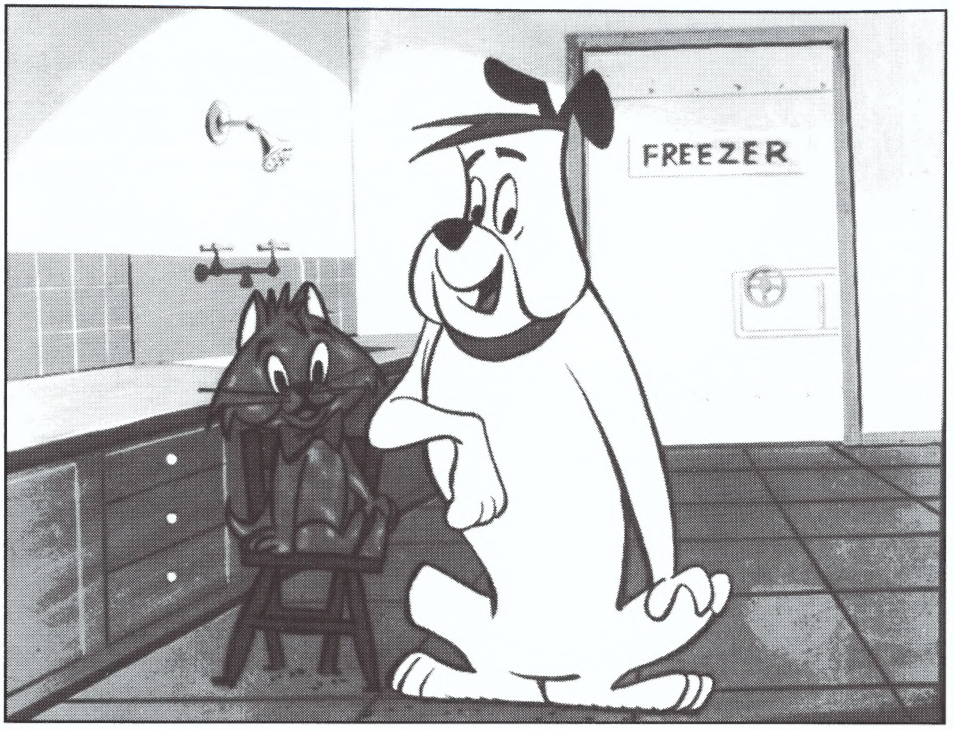

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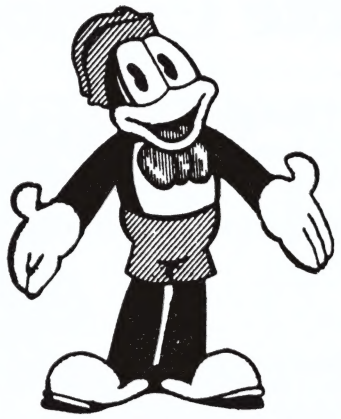

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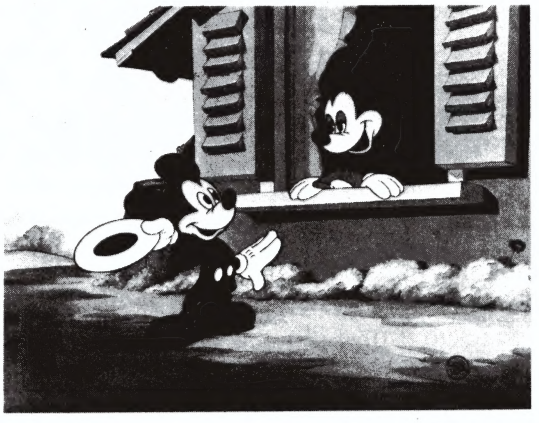

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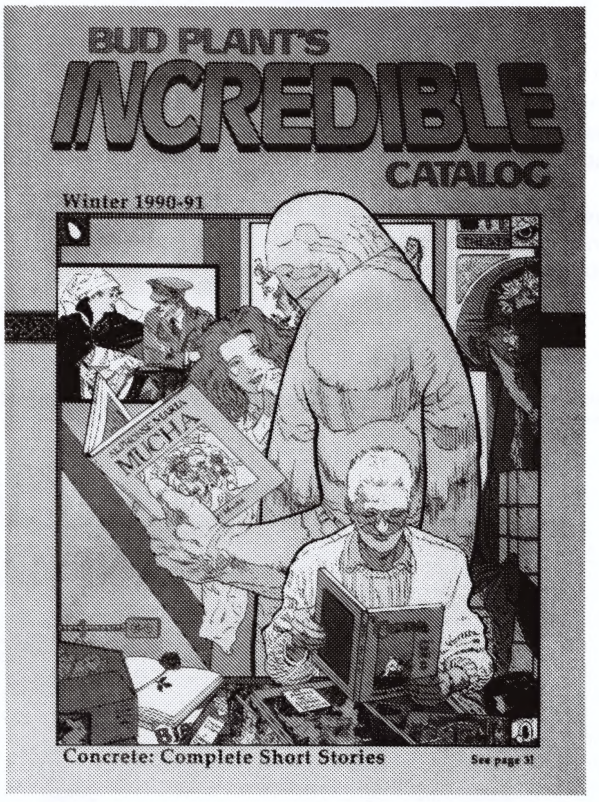

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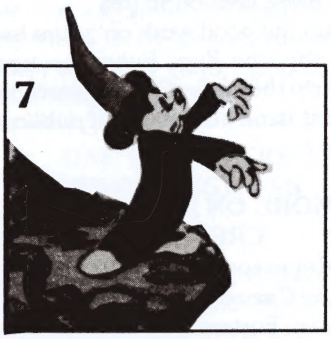
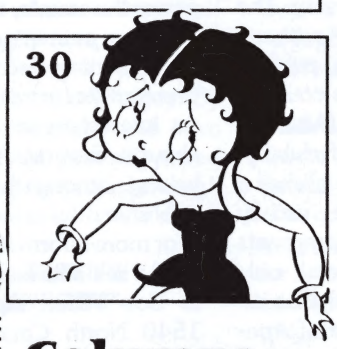
In This Issue





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On the Cover: Elmer Fudd has never looked quite so majestic as in this inspirational painting by Maurice Noble for *What's Opera, Doc?* From the collection of Mike and Jeanne Glad. Copyright © Warner Bros. Inc.

ANIMATO (ISSN: 1042-539X) #21, Spring, 1991. Published at PO Box 1240, Cambridge, MA 02238. Subscription rate: $10.00 for four issues in North America; $15.00 in US funds elsewhere. Original contributions copyright © 1991 Animato except where noted. Unsolicited manuscripts and artwork are welcome, but should be accompanied by a SASE. Available back issues are #17 (Ralph Bakshi interview; Chinese animation; *Who Framed Roger Rabbit*) and #19 (John Lasseter and Pixar; Virgil Ross; Disney's Florida studio) at $3.00 postpaid and #20 (Bugs Bunny, *Pinocchio*, *Robotech*, Roger Rabbit's roots) at $4.00 postpaid. All other back issues are sold out. Sorry!

Animatorial

Not too long after this issue of *Animato* goes to press, *Apatoons* — animation's APA — will celebrate its tenth anniversary. The milestone is a significant one: *Apatoons* is the longest-lived animation publication currently published in this country.

For the uninitiated, an APA (Amateur Press Association) is a sort of club-by-mail in which each member publishes a small photocopied magazine, usually made up primarily of his own comments on the APA's subject. In general, only contributors can receive an APA, although a special sampler issue of *Apatoons* will be available at this year's San Diego Comic Con.

Apatoons's membership is made up of about twenty-five contributors from across the country and around the world, including animation professionals, writers, and interested bystanders. The only prerequisites are a love of animation and an interest in expressing one's views about it. Several *Animato* contributors belong, among them your editor and publisher.

For more information about *Apatoons*, send a self-addressed stamped envelope to Bob Miller, *Apatoons*'s editor, at 1540 North Catalina, Apartment N, Burbank, CA 91505.

Fan Mail From Some Flounder

Write to Animato at PO Box 1240, Cambridge • MA 02238

GREAT MOUSE DETECTIVE SPOTTED IN RECORD STORE

Tom Linehan
West Roxbury, MA

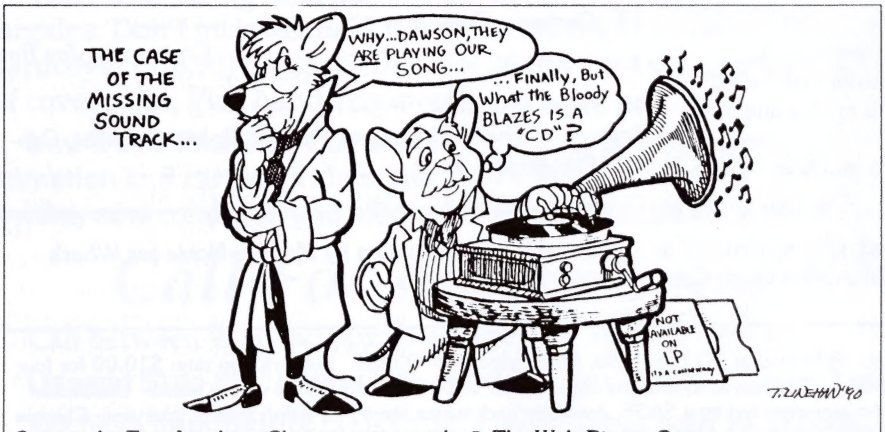
Enjoyed the new format that debuted with the Bugs Bunny issue, particularly the article about the new team on the comic strip, Brett Koth and Shawn Keller. Also enjoyed the countdown on Bugs's greatest hits, which would make a great prerecorded tape.

The real reason I'm writing is to respond to John Cawley's column regarding the soundtrack to *The Great Mouse Detective*. Although there is no formally studio-backed score, Henry Mancini has released the main theme to the Disney picture on the Denon release *Premiere Pops* (CC 72320), available on cassette and CD. This is a spirited rendition of the theme and should be some compensation for the lack of a complete album with those wonderful Vincent Price songs.

Also, John and readers should know that there is an LP version of *All Dogs Go to Heaven* (CRB 10403). It's out there, but you've gotta look for it.

Recently, there's been a surge of noted composers doing cartoons, like Danny Elfman (*The Simpsons*), Bruce Boughton (*Tiny Toon Adventures*), and James Horner (*Tummy Trouble*). With recent audio releases like *The Carl Stalling Project* (excellent stuff), one can hope that we'll be hearing more cartoon music.

Keep up the good work on future issues. *(Sad to say, the Bugs Bunny newspaper comic strip that John Cawley wrote about in the last issue discontinued publication recently.)*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Cartoon by Tom Linehan. Characters copyright © The Walt Disney Company.

MORE ON MR. TOAD'S CREDITORS

Mark Mayerson
Toronto, Canada

Alan Dean Foster ("Fan Mail From Some Flounder, " *Animato* #18) may be interested to know that the scenes of Toad's creditors that are missing from the current video release of *The Wind in the Willows* were also missing from the 1950s *Disneyland* TV show in which it was shown with an edited version of *The Reluctant Dragon*. Quite recently, the Disney Channel showed the "complete" version of *The Reluctant Dragon* without the end of the "Baby Weems" sequence.

The scenes missing are not censorable, and I don't think they were cut on the basis of running time. I strongly suspect these cuts are the result of carelessness. There are so many versions of some Disney cartoons (as parts of 1940s features, as reissued solo shorts, and as parts of TV shows), that whoever pulled the material from the library probably grabbed an incomplete version without knowing so.

While Disney has strongly protected their films from a monetary standpoint, they don't have a very good track record from an artistic one. Many of their theatrical reissues are shown in the wrong aspect ratio. *Fantasia*'s soundtrack has been screwed around with repeatedly. In the 1970s they rereleased *The Three Caballeros* in a 45 minute version! Be thankful that there's a profit to be made in home video, or instead of complaining about cuts in *Mr. Toad*, we'd all be wishing that we could see it.

I very much enjoyed John Province's interview with Bill Justice. I think that the pencil that Justice mentioned was transcribed incorrectly. The 6/8th should have been a 6H. Drawing pencils come in degrees of hardness. The B series is soft, and the H is hard. A 6H is one hard pencil.

(While Disney's record on preservation of their animated films is mixed, they should be commended for their current Fantasia *rerelease, which undoes the tampering imposed on the film for its 1982 rere-*

lease and features excellently-restored sound and visuals. All in the correct aspect ratio, no less.

You are correct about the type of pencil Bill Justice mentioned, a typographical error that somehow managed to slip by proofreadings by John Province, Bill Justice, and your editor, who definitely should have caught it.)

ONE CORRECTION, TWO QUESTIONS

Thomas Shim
New York, NY

There are no storymen credited with *The Old Grey Hare* and *The Big Snooze* in *Animato* #20. While this is so in *The Big Snooze,* Michael Sasanoff does get screen dues for *The Old Grey Hare.* Thought you might like to know, Harry.

In all other respects, a fine, fine issue. Bravo. I do have two questions: whatever happened to "Toons on Tape?" Did Matthew Hasson finally burn out? And just how scientific is the Animato Film Poll? In other words, do you check for repeat entries, or do you throw the whole batch into your computer?

(Thanks for the correction and the kind words.

Matt Hasson is far from burnt out, as evidenced by this issue's installment of "Toons on Tape."

The Animato *Film Poll is an informal poll based on the lists sent to us by readers. While George Gallup or Lou Harris might think the pool of voters too small to be statistically significant, we find it an interesting reflection of the films and shows our readers particularly enjoy. By the way, it's fine for readers who have submitted lists in the past to send revised ones — the poll is sophisticated enough to replace your old votes with new ones.)*

ROSS AND JUSTICE "LIVING HISTORY"

Len Kohl
Chicago, IL

You guys are doing a terrific job! My only gripe is that John Province's interviews with people like Virgil Ross and Bill Justice aren't *longer*. These guys are "living history." Their thoughts should be recorded for posterity. I tried to do just that with animators Shamus Culhane and Gordon Sheehan for a lengthy "Popeye" article in the film newspaper *Classic Images.*

(The interviews by John Province we've published — including this issue's one with the late Grim Natwick — are excerpts from the work he's done for a planned book of interviews with animation artists who worked during the golden age of Hollywood animation. This book will be precisely the sort of "living history" you're talking about.

Meanwhile, enjoy this issue's sizable interview with Maurice Noble.)

B&W DISNEYS BEING WASTED

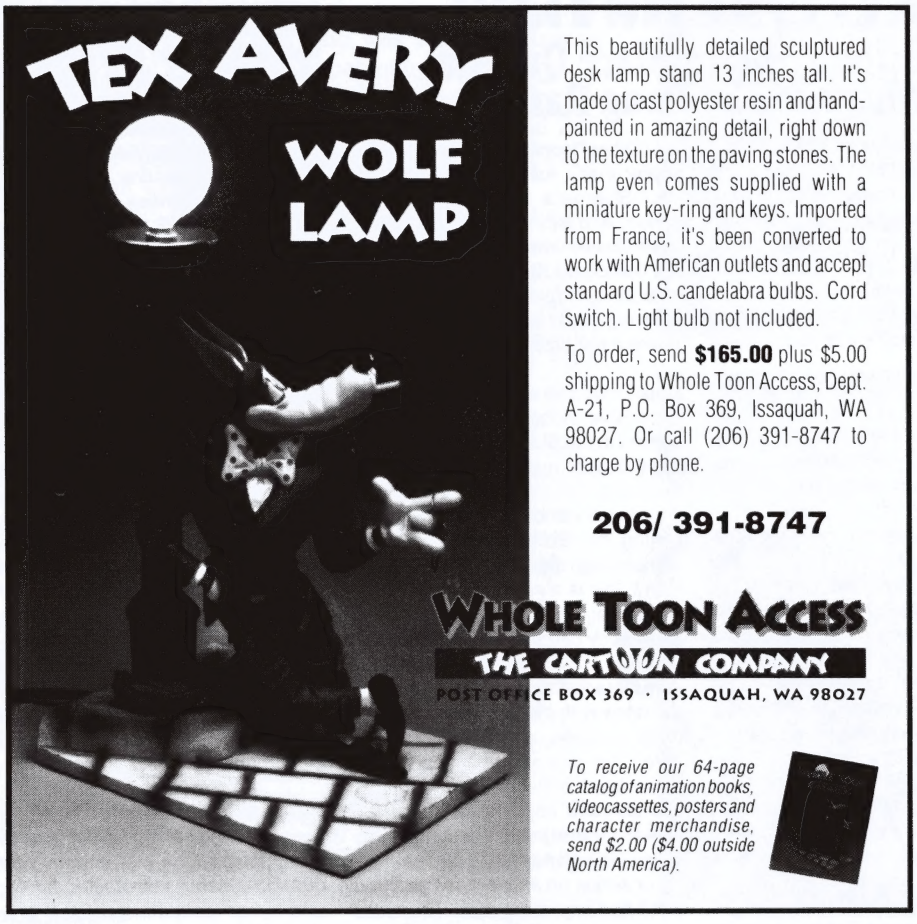
David Gerstein
Santa Barbara, CA

I've got to tell you how much I enjoy your magazine. It's filled with millions of articles for animation buffs like me who can't get enough obscure facts and interesting insights...I'd like to tell you something: that is that 75% of Mickey Mouse's cartoons were in black and white and about *ten* are available uncut! Years ago, you could get them all on the Disney Channel; but the fact that they're in black and white meant that about two years ago, they were completely eliminated with most of the other black-and-white "kid's fare."

Now, you can see the same early 1950s Pluto cartoon on four different shows at once, but as for Pluto's first appearance in *The Chain Gang*...no one can see that! No one at Disney realizes how many people out there would buy a video collection of these entries. I think ten videos which collectors would want to buy could be made with the complete series of black-and-white Mickeys.

(Nobody would like to see such tapes more than we would. Unfortunately, there seems to be an unwritten law that people — kids, especially — aren't interested in watching anything that's in black and white. This is the belief behind the invention of the dreaded colorization process, and it's undoubtedly why the many fine black-and-white Disney cartoons are not more widely seen. (Their relative crudity is probably another reason.)

Any animation fan who wants to see more use made of the early Disney films might try writing the studio; it couldn't hurt. While it would be wonderful if Disney released the films in their pristine black-and-white glory, the studio might at least consider computer-coloring them, as Warner's has done recently with several films to fairly good effect. Reportedly, the awful hand-colored Warner cartoons produced years ago in Korea that are currently in circulation will eventually be replaced by computer-colored versions.) ■



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Praxinoscope

The World of Animation

Two Resources for Collectors

Animation art collecting, being a young hobby, is not nearly as well-defined as stamp collecting, coin collecting, and other pursuits with long histories. While both interest in the hobby and animation art prices have skyrocketed, there has been something of an information vacuum that's led to misidentified pieces at auctions, wildly differing prices for similar works, and other problems.

The Animation Art Guild, which has been in operation since last year, aims to correct that. Guild directors Pamela and Michael Scoville have established an ambitious program of publications and services to aid collectors. The Guild publishes two fine newsletters: the eight-times-a-year bulletin *The Update* and a more elaborate quarterly publication, *Directions*. Other membership benefits include access to information in a database of art auction prices, a mail-order book service, and a search service for out-of-print books. Additional services are in the planning stages.

Membership in the Animation Art Guild is $49.00 in the U.S. More information is available from the Guild at 330 West 45th St., Suite 9D, New York, NY 10036. The telephone number is (212) 765-3030.

Also of interest to collectors is *Cel Magic*, a new book compiled by R. Scott Edwards and Bob Stobener that's the first one devoted to the topic of collectiong animation art. While some of the material in the historical chapters is questionable, the information on collecting — including an interview with Dave Smith of the Disney Archives and sections on cel preservation and art prices — is invaluable. There are also a large number of well-reproduced color illustrations. The book is priced at $19.95 and is available now. ■

The Toon Advisor
Cartoon Marketplace Queries Answered by Doug Ranney

Dear Doug: While we're waiting for somebody to release episodes of *Mighty Mouse: the New Adventures* on tape, can you tell us what Ralph Bakshi films are available on videotape?

Only two Bakshi features are currently in release on home video. Streetfight (1975), originally titled Coonskin, *is Baskhi's live-action/animated vision of Harlem street life. It's available from Academy for $29.95.* Fire & Ice *(1983) is a sword-and-sorcery epic co-produced by Frank Frazetta and inspired by his work. It's available from RCA/Columbia for $79.95 on VHS and $34.95 on laserdisc.* Fritz the Cat, Heavy Traffic, Lord of the Rings, *and* American Pop *are all long gone from video release and essentially unobtainable. On moratorium, but still possible to find as of January 1991, are* Hey Good Lookin' *(Warner Home Video) and* Wizards *(Playhouse Video).*

We all look forward to Mighty Mouse: the New Adventures, *which Bakshi has pledged to make available on home video, including the infamous three-second flower/cocaine sniffing scene. Be careful, though, not to confuse the series with* The New Adventures of Mighty Mouse *— a Filmation show from ten years earlier which is available on tape.*

Dear Doug: If you were going to advise someone who was planning to spend the rest of his life on a desert island and could only take three (currently available) animation books with him, which ones would you suggest?

You must have Leonard Maltin's Of Mice and Magic. *Period. As far as I'm concerned, it's the best-written, most accurate, most complete single history of American studio animation there is. It can serve as the cornerstone of any animation reference library and give you a good read no matter how many times you go back to it.*

My other two choices bear in mind your specification of "currently available." Beck and Friedwald's Looney Tunes and Merrie Melodies *is a remarkable filmography. It's unquestionably the acme of detailed reference data on Warner cartoons, and the synopsis provided for each and every Warner cartoon helps the reader to recall the cartoons and replay them in his mind. Definitely a plus for those long, lonely years under the coconut palms. Much the same can be said for George Woolery's books,* Children's Television Part 1: Animated Cartoon Series *and* Animated TV Specials. *They're both remarkably complete, and the information-packed synopses really conjure up the cartoons in the reader's mind.*

As far as out-of-print treasures go, Shamus Culhane's Talking Animals and Other People *is a great autobiography that's full of history, insight, and Shamus's unblinking insider's vision. And let's not forget* The Art of Walt Disney *and* Disney Animation: the Illusion of Life. *They're both massive, beautiful picture books that, after reading, could be lashed together to make a fair-sized ocean-going raft.*

Dear Doug: I've noticed that many inexpensive videotapes are now recorded at the SLP speed, resulting in poor quality audio and video. Are there any companies releasing public-domain cartoons that are maintaining the SLP speed? Are there companies I should stay away from?

Geez, this is a sticky matter for consumers and merchants alike. I think everybody can spot the cheapo SLP (aka EP) public-domain tapes sold at mass market outlets. You know — the ones with the full-color but hideously-crude box art that sell for $4.99. If you buy one of these, you should either know better or be grateful that you can see anything at all on the screen for that price. The ironic thing is, you sometimes find a rare character or series on these tapes that you can't find anywhere else. There are also many small companies releasing PD material that do stick to SP speed. Of course, the film prints to be pretty beat up, and the duplicating master may be done on 1/2" or 3/4" tape, but at least they don't skimp on tape by copying at EP speed.

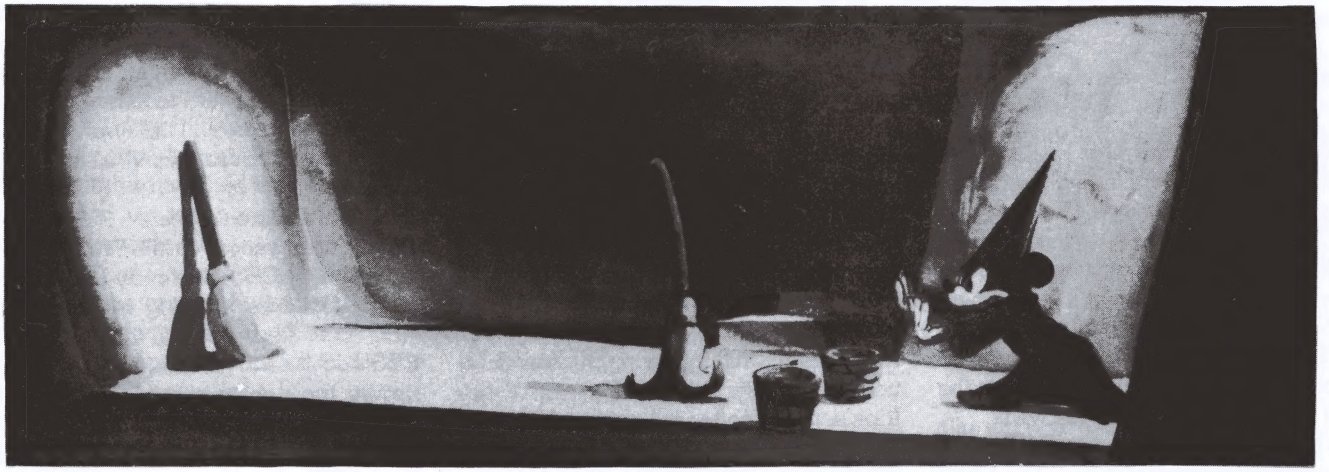
Some small companies that release PD material on SP tapes and at least try for good quality are: Video Yesteryear (fair), Shokus Video (marginal), Video Resources/Ira Gallen (very good), Video Rarities (good), Bosko Video (very good), and Loonic Video (fair). All these companies may be low-budget, but I think you'll be satisfied with the tapes they put out.

To me, the really distressing cases are the big-time, mainstream, expensive-looking releases that are recorded in EP mode. By far the worst offender is Family Home Entertainment (FHE). They put out 45-minute Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles *videos and thirty-minute Chuck Jones TV specials (*Cricket in Times Square, *etc.) for $14.95 on EP tape. I mean, really...By contrast, Disney puts out 75-minute* Lucky Luke *tapes in SP speed for only $9.95.*

By the way, the easiest way to detect an EP cassette is simply to weigh it. A 45-minute SP tape is noticeably heavier than a 45-minute EP tape. If you're unsure, just hold a known SP tape in one hand and compare. ■

Doug Ranney, co-owner of The Whole Toon Catalog, *a mail-order source for all things toon, will answer your questions about videotapes, books, and other animation-related products. Write him c/o* Animato.

Fantasia Art Missing in Museum of Cartoon Art Theft

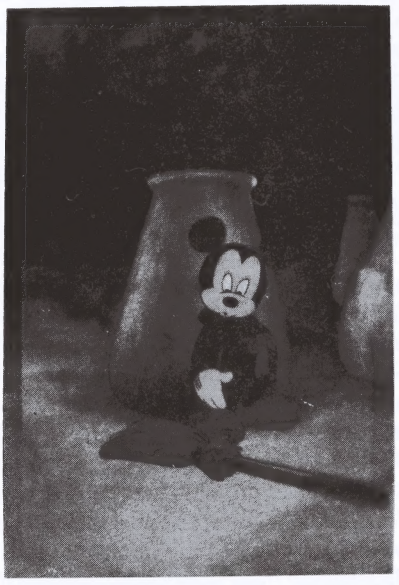


On Sunday, March 3rd, five pieces of original art from the production of *Fantasia* were stolen from the Museum of Cartoon Art in Rye Brook, New York, where they were being readied for an exhibit of artwork from the film. The pieces, from the collection of Mike and Jeanne Glad, are estimated to have a collective value in the low six figures.

The suspect in the case, who was seen by museum personnel while the theft was apparently in progress, is described as a white male in his mid forties with a pencil moustache and brown eyes, weighing between 180 and 200 pounds and standing about five feet three inches tall. He is said to speak with a foreign accent.

A reward of $5,000 is being offered for the safe return of the artwork, no questions asked. Collectors or dealers who may be offered the pieces for sale or have other information on their whereabouts are urged to call the Rye Brook Police Department at (914) 937-6368; the Museum's Executive Director, Barbara Hammond, at (914) 939-7214; or Michelle O'Neal of Mike Glad's office at (415) 490-2303.

The *Fantasia* exhibition will open as planned on March 10th and runs through June 16th. Over one hundred pieces from the Mike and Jeanne Glad collection will be on display, including reproductions of the stolen art. For more information, contact the Museum at (914) 939-0234. ■



The missing art, clockwise from top: watercolor painting by Tom Codrick of Mickey bringing broomsticks to life, from the "Sorcerer's Apprentice" sequence; watercolor painting by John Hubley of apprentice Mickey at a waterfall; caricature by Alex Igatieu of animator Bill Tytla as the devil from the "Night on Bald Mountain" sequence; cel of Mickey Mouse as the Sorcerer's Apprentice against master background. Not pictured: photostat of village rooftops from the "Night on Bald Mountain" sequence. All art copyright © The Walt Disney Company.

Get Animated!
Industry Watch
News and Commentary by John Cawley

Rescuers Down and Out

The Rescuers Down Under, a sequel to Disney's box-office success *The Rescuers* (1977) has failed to match the financial magic of the original...or even the other major animation releases of 1990. Opening in over 1200 theaters, the film did less that $3.5 million with a per-theater average of just over $2800. It ranked #4 in the list of top-grossing films of the week.

This compares pretty poorly with Disney's most recent animated features. *The Little Mermaid* (1989) opened in third place with over $6 million in less than 1000 theaters, for a per-theater average of over $6000. *Oliver & Company* (1988) pulled in over $4 million at under 4000 theaters, for a per-theater average of over $4000. Those same years, Don Bluth's *All Dogs Go to Heaven* (1989) pulled in over $4.7 million and *Land Before Time* (1988) did over $7.5 million opening weekend. You have to go back to 1987's *The Chipmunk Adventure* to find a major release doing less than Rescuers II.

It can't be blamed on the economy or a lack of interest in animated features in 1990. The year saw Disney's TV-based, European-animated *DuckTales: the Movie* pull in over $3.8 million. *Jungle Book*'s summer reissue opened with over $7.7 million, while *Fantasia*'s fiftieth debuted at $5.2 million.

Rescuers Down Under will probably end up doing around $25 million. Though this is a respectable figure for an animated feature, it pales when compared to the recent megasuccesses of *The Little Mermaid, Oliver & Company, The Land Before Time*, and *An American Tail*, each of which grossed over $50 million.

What went wrong? Basically, it appears to be a repeat of the *Great Mouse Detective* (1986) syndrome: very little promotion. Both films garnered good reviews, but got almost no studio support. After *Mouse Detective* did so poorly in the summer, *An American Tail* came out that fall and rewrote the box-office history books on animation. It also spurred the rebirth of financial interest in animation.

Disney learned from this, and made *Oliver*'s and *Mermaid*'s promotions gigantic. Battling head-to-head with Universal's *Land Before Time* and Sullivan Bluth's *All Dogs Go to Heaven*, Disney went all out to promote its films, and won the spot of #1 grossing animated film for both years.

However, the fall of 1990 found no competing major animated features. Disney took a much softer-sell approach, letting the studio's name and the perceived recognition of the title sell the film. Unfortunately, a film showed up that became major competition for Disney's: *Home Alone*. This family comedy made short work of many alleged holiday blockbusters, including Disney's other major release, *Three Men and a Little Lady*.

A less-visible piece of the puzzle may be the alleged non-interest of key studio brass in the project. Originally, Eisner's new management team decided to do a sequel to the studio's most financially-successful feature (*The Rescuers*) because the most recent animated features at the time (*Great Mouse, Black Cauldron*) had not performed well. (Up until the release of *An American Tail*, *Rescuers* was the top-grossing film, on first release, in animation history.) Initial interest was reportedly low, since the film didn't take a new direction, but was merely a recycling of old Disney characters.

However, once management discovered that they didn't need past Disney successes to make new animated successes, interest dropped even more. The directors of *Rescuers II* were allegedly disappointed when they saw the mild promotion being prepared for their feature, especially compared to the major blowout being planned for 1991's *Beauty and the Beast*.

The bottom line is that *Rescuers Down Under*, for whatever reasons, will be one of the lowest-grossing Disney (and possibly major) animated features in recent years.

Cartoon by Jerry Riddle; characters copyright © The Walt Disney Company and Warner Bros. Inc.

CBS Takes the Lead

With the *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* in its lineup, CBS has finally passed ABC as the Saturday-morning ratings leader; NBC now finds itself in the third spot. CBS's decision to go for an hour of *Turtles* proved the turning point, boosting other well-rated CBS shows like *Garfield and Friends* and *Muppet Babies* back to the top. ABC's former powerhouses *Ghostbusters* and *Beetlejuice* are still doing well, but the addition of more action-adventure shows aimed at boys (see last issue's *GA! Industry Watch*) on other networks has defused the previously-unbeatable ABC lineup.

Meanwhile, the Fox Saturday morning lineup has been in the number four spot, as is most of Fox's primetime lineup. Fox's best-performing series are generally *Tom and Jerry Kids* and *Bobby's World*. Oddly, though *T&J Kids* has higher ratings, *Bobby's World* has a better share against the three other networks, often with only 50% of what the other networks are getting. Other Fox shows, such as *T&J Kids*, generally get 30-40% of the big three networks.

Renewals for 1991-1992 include *Garfield and Friends* (CBS), *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* (CBS), *Bobby's World* (Fox), *Tom and Jerry Kids* (Fox), and *Attack of the Killer Tomatoes* (Fox). No doubt another returnee will be *the Bugs Bunny and Tweety Show*, still usually tops in its time slot.

Altering the Classics

Disney got plenty of press when it went to work on the new reissue of *Fantasia*. For this fiftieth-anniversary presentation, the studio digitally cleaned up the sound, cleaned and corrected the negatives, and even recropped some scenes so that more of the original footage (featuring black caricatures) could be included. Most of the press and public applauded such enhancements to the classic film.

However, most seem to have forgotten similar tampering in the 1980s created

quite a critical backlash. Most familiar was when Disney decided to crop all the classic features so they would fit on a wide screen. (In the past, theaters often did this anyway, but Disney left the films full frame so that more caring cinema owners could project them at the correct ration.) For the new *Fantasia* reissue, this new cropping was not put into effect.

Disney's other efforts at "touching up" the soundtracks of its films have received almost no notice. It seems that all the early Disney features have had their sound digitally cleaned up for theatrical release to help remove some of the age and hiss. This process can include splitting the dialogue tracks. Characters on the left side of the screen have their dialogue coming out of the left speaker, and characters on the right are heard from that side.

It can also include the rerecording of some effects material. Examples of this occur in *Bambi*, whose home video packaging states "stereo." When the baby rabbits begin laughing at Bambi when he stumbles, tries to say "bird," and so on, their laughter has been rerecorded in *true* stereo. So have the barking dogs who corner Faline. All parties at Disney are insistent that no major dialogue, though, is ever rerecorded.

Cartoon by Mark Marderoisian.

Such fiddling with rabbits' laughter probably doesn't mean much, but Disney must be careful how such additions are done. For example, when the studio added the new stereo dog barks, it *did* affect the film's original music track. The music becomes slightly muted whenever the stereo dogs are brought in.

Forgotten Animation Hits Video

Twice Upon a Time (1983), George Lucas's long-lost first foray into animated features, is set for release this spring from Warner Home Video. The offbeat story features a dog and his man on the quest for a cosmic clock. The film is filmed in the "Lumage" process, which is a modern version of shadow, or silhouette, animation, pioneered by the late Lotte Reiniger.

For Lucas's fist venture into animation (he later worked with Spielberg and Bluth on *Land Before Time*), he went to San Francisco animator John Korty (*Sesame Street* and others). For this feature, they developed a new silhouette animation system that gave even more dimension and depth than a multiplane camera. At the time, Korty hoped to use the new setup for numerous films.

The film never received a full theatrical release. Lucasfilm bought out a theater in Southern California at the time and ran it for a week. [It also was shown, unsuccessfully, in the Boston area. — Ed.] Most reviewers and even animation followers seemed unimpressed. The quirky, curious film will now have a chance to be evaluated by the animation masses.

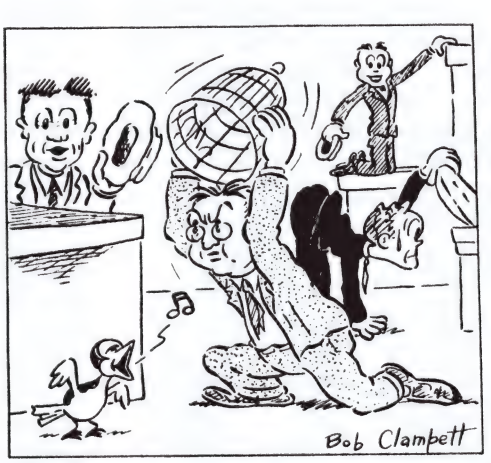
Also from Warner's this spring will be *Gay Purr-ee* (1963), UPA's second animated feature. Based on a story by Chuck Jones, and largely designed by Corny Cole, the film features the voices of Judy Garland and Robert Goulet. Often on TV, the feature is another distinctive product that is enjoyable but flawed. ■

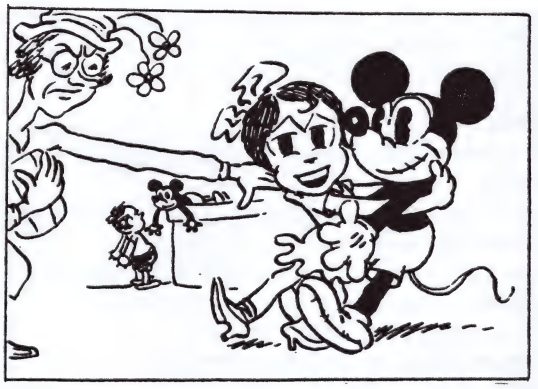
Portrait of Bob Clampett as a Young Cartoonist

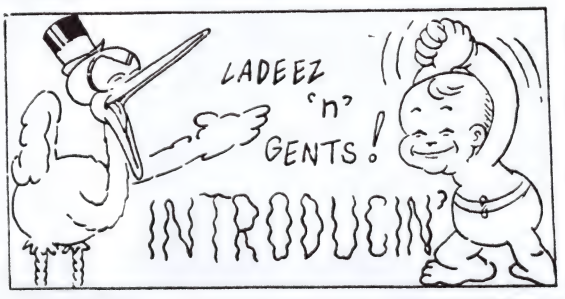
Here we have some early cartoons by Bob Clampett, reprinted from a 1931 edition of *The Broadway World,* an internal publication of The Broadway department store chain of Southern California.

"We are much favored in this issue by having several cartoons from the pen of Robert E. Clampett, a young local cartoonist of much promise," reported the magazine. "Mr. Clampett is a member of the Harmon-Ising [sic] Animated Studios, and has much to do with the creation of funny little Bosko and his pals...He was particularly active in publication circles at the Glendale High School from which he graduated a year ago...He writes as well as draws, and from present indications has a brilliant future ahead of him." Little did they know how brilliant that career would be!

Many thanks to *Animato* reader and The Broadway archivist John Sherman for uncovering these carrtoons and bringing them to our attention.







State-of-the-Art Artist

Mike Gabriel joined the Walt Disney Animation Department in 1979. Just over ten years later, he directed (with Hendel Butoy) The Rescuers Down Under, *Disney's 29th full-length animated feature. With this film — acclaimed by such publications as* Time, Newsweek, *and* The New York Times *as a groundbreaking achievement in the art of animated filmmaking — Gabriel firmly establishes himself as a leading talent in the animation industry. Here, Gabriel reflects on his career and the experience of directing Disney's first non-musical action-adventure animated feature.*

Jim Fanning

Jim Fanning: *Why don't we begin with your own beginnings?*

Mike Gabriel: I'm what's known as an Air Force brat, and I have ten brothers and sisters. I've lived throughout the country, but a large part of my childhood was spent in Kansas, out there in the wheat fields and the rivers and all that, so I have a real affinity for nature and for haystacks and a Huckleberry Finn kind of outdoorsy fun. I love anything rural and bucolic — lightning bugs, birds, and lazy old streams that freeze over in the winter, and all that sort of thing.

When did you decide that you were going to work in Disney animation?

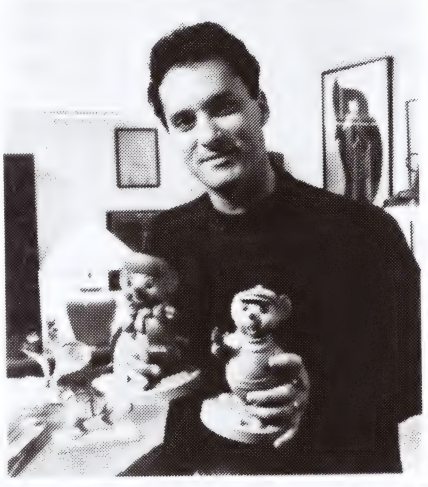
I came here by birth, practically. Honestly, as far back as I can remember, I always knew that's where I wanted to go. It was never if, it was never maybe, it was always that's where I'm going. And it's really a blessing to know where you want to go, because you're always working toward it.

Unfortunately, I wasn't good enough to get in for a number of years. I would always be sending drawings in, and never get accepted. They were always encouraging me to take more art classes, more life drawing classes. And I just tried for years and years, and I always expected a letter back: "Hey, you're great, come on in," but it never came.

So I just kept drawing, drawing, drawing. I would take art classes and life drawing classes in college, but I would spend many more hours at home on my own drawing out of great masters books — you know, Rembrandt or Michelangelo or anything. So a few years went by where I worked hard to get good enough to get into Disney. I was determined I wasn't going to try again until I knew I was good enough.

I finally decided to call Disney and say, "I think I'm ready to be one of your artists."

Mike Gabriel and friends. Copyright © 1990 The Walt Disney Company.



They were nice enough to set me up with an appointment right away. So the next day, maybe, I came in with my portfolio, and I walked up to the great Disney animation building and looked at it like, "This is where I'm going to be from now on." But they said, "Well, we can't really accept you on these, because you've drawn them from books, not from life, so thanks for coming in, see you later." I mean, I was absolutely devastated. I just had such a feeling like, "This is where I belong. I really want to be here."

I came home and just got out the sketchpad and started that same day drawing from life. I went to the beach with my brothers and watched them throw the Frisbee, and drew them playing at the beach. I had friends play basketball as I ran around with my sketchpad and just sketched them. I did everything I could to give them what they wanted, and finally these crummy little drawings on a pad of paper got me hired. I mailed them in on a Monday and got hired that week.

What were your first animation assignments?

I started on *The Fox and the Hound* as an inbetweener. And then, within about a year and a half, I was doing animation on small projects like the *Condorman* titles and *Fun With Mr. Future*, which Darrell Van Citters directed. Then I started animating on *The Black Cauldron* and did some Gurgi. I did a lot of characters on *Black Cauldron*.

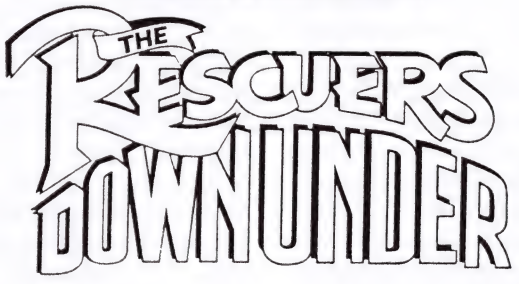
Cauldron was like four or five years. After that, I guess it was *The Great Mouse Detective* and then *Oliver & Company*.

By then you were being asked to contribute quite a bit more to each film, right?

I slowly got to do a little more and more on each picture. On *Great Mouse Detective* I got to design Toby the dog, and animate a fair amount of his stuff. I got to kind of oversee the fat cat, Felicia, helped to design her, and animated a lot of her. I had a ball doing that.

Oliver & Company was my first experience with story; the director, George Scribner, allowed to take part in developing the story. I hit it off with George real well, and I would go with him to recording sessions and start learning how you handle a recording session for animation. I got to fly to New York and work with Billy Joel, the voice of Dodger. George also made me a sequence director, which gave me a lot of

Mike Gabriel on Directing Disney's



An Interview by Jim Fanning

experience with issuing scenes to animators, and looking at tests, and being able to criticize other people's work and get a little confidence that you can improve a scene.

Personally, I hate people showing me stuff and then having to criticize it. That is not a fun situation to be in. Well, that's what a director has to do all the time. And all you can hope is that you're helping an animator put something better on the screen, that you're not tearing down what they're doing, because they're so talented to begin with.

How did you become a director on The Rescuers Down Under*?*

I got enough of the taste of directing on *Oliver* that somebody — I don't know who — decided that I might be a good director after that film. So somebody recommended me.

At the first hearing of the idea of doing a sequel to *The Rescuers* — I should say, a sequel at all — I don't think either Hendel Butoy or I were particularly excited by that, because you feel like that's a road that's already been walked by somebody else. Why do I want to walk in anyone else's footprints?

But throw in the fact that it's going to be in Australia, and that was sort of the trump card that you couldn't quite resist. I mean, here's a whole region of unique animals that have never been tapped by Disney animation before, and you'd be a fool not to see the possibilities. You know, koala bears and kangaroos and frill-necked lizards, and all the snakes and the wombats and kookaburras. And the region is so beautiful.

And then you start to realize that those characters, Bernard and Bianca, were so popular. Hendel and I went out to a Mexican restaurant and talked it over one day before accepting the job, and we realized how nice it would be to start a film where you have characters that are proven hits. The designs are done, and they're very appealing; they were done by the Nine Old Men long before we got on board.

The film captures a real sense of Australia and all its many unusual aspects. What sort of research did you do?

One of the first sensations I had when I accepted this job directing *Rescuers Down Under* was the absolute awareness that I didn't know a thing about Australia, and that it was impossible for me to even conceive of trying to make a film about Australia without having ever having been there. So I talked to the producer, Tom Schumacher, and Hendel and I said that we needed to go to Australia to experience it to know how to visualize this film.

The executives at first, when they heard that, sort of said, "Ha ha, right." They figured that we were just trying to get a free trip to Australia, but they didn't take long to realize we were dead serious and we meant it. We weren't about to do this film without going to Australia!

Hendel and I, the producer Tom Schumacher, the art director Maurice Hunt, and our head storyman Joe Ranft went all through the country for about three weeks. The Australian outback is the most phenomenal region. It looked as it had never been touched by man, and that's a great credit to the Aboriginal people who always live off the land, and never harm the land. They only take what they need, and they always replenish.

We met Aboriginal people and saw them painting their great paintings, and had a barbecue with some of them. We ate under the stars with them, and the played their instruments around the campfire. It was one of the most wonderful, wonderful nights of my life.

We saw everything you could imagine on an Australian vacation. Bats flying at night, and the most beautiful birds and the white sea eagle. We were inspired by the white sea eagle — it's the actual name of the character in our film — Marahute — the Aboriginals' word for white sea eagle, which they believe is the holy carrier of souls to heaven. This bird will go up to anything dead and carry off its carcass to its nest — the Aborigines' religion interprets that to be carrying the souls up to heaven.

It just really inspired us that we could put something on the screen that people haven't seen in animated film before. To give them a look at this region through artists' eyes, based on reality. But we haven't restricted our thinking to keep it exactly as we saw it. We didn't just paint photographs. We interpreted. We weren't afraid to go beyond what we saw.

The good vs. evil theme certainly seems central to most animated films. Can you expand on how you dealt with these forces in The Rescuers Down Under*?*

The little boy, Cody, is mankind's pure and good relationship with nature and the animal world. McLeach is mankind's bad and evil influence on nature and the planet. So his introduction is shown by mowing through these trees, and birds scattering.

The kid also is color-schemed with a very lucid color palette: yellow, red, and orange. That is all purity and light and goodness, and McLeach is all in greens — or the complement of red in the color scheme, so that's another way you establish polar opposites in the visuals of the film.

The color of Marahute is also chosen just for the beauty and the purity of the color yellow. There were some beautiful designs done — she was beautifully black with these grey, red, or magenta underwings, and the animators were all excited about it. But to us that would have said, "Here comes the evil Marahute," with her black and red, very strong, dynamic coloring. It just would have said the wrong thing. And

also, I wanted to relate her color yellow with Cody's color to make them seem more out of the same cut of cloth.

How did you and Hendel Butoy handle the sharing of the directorial assignment?

People always wonder, how can you co-

direct? I mean, a film has to be directed by one mind in basically one direction. Well, that's true. You can't co-direct with somebody who is completely opposite of what your tastes are and what your thinking is.

The reason Hendel and I co-directed is because we're very much alike in our thinking and our approach to filmmaking, animation, and character design. We've worked together for ten years at Disney as animators, and when they put together this film and asked if we wanted to direct, they asked each of us who we would like to direct with. Well, we picked each other because we knew full well that we would have similar tastes. There's a lot less conflict than you would imagine, simply because we're the right guys to be working together.

We're a two-headed beast, really. We would walk around together all the time, look at animation together, and discuss what the animators would show us. Often Hendel and I would just go off in a room by ourselves if we had a real problem in story, and try to work out a direction to take it in to give to the story people.

Was computer animation used in The Rescuers Down Under?

When Wilbur jumps off the skyscraper and the camera goes right over with him and pivots around him, and looks back up at him and then swings down. That shot was possible because we can computerize the whole city of New York and then texture map it with windows, and then put real snow blowing on top of real character animation. But the background is all computer-generated imagery.

We also used it for McLeach's truck. The Sydney Opera House, which was a combination of hand-painted backgrounds and then the Sydney Opera House itself — that level was computer generated, but there are three levels of hand-drawn background paintings behind that. So we did a lot of combining things, too, to disguise it.

Nobody wants you to notice that there's been a computer-generated image anywhere in the film. If you notice it, then we've failed. I would say McLeach's truck was excellently executed, because it is just so loose and flexible. You think you're looking at a truck; you're never thinking of a computer-generated drawing.

And you still have to animate them, too, that's the thing. Animators have to sit there and figure out how to make that thing look real and move right. It's not like you turn a switch on and it runs.

It doesn't matter what your tool is. The computer is just a new pencil. I don't think it will ever replace pencil-drawing character animation, becuase that's the tool to use to get the best result. I mean, Disney animation is about character animation. It's about personalities and being able to draw from inside yourself the truest emotion and get it onto the paper. And I think the best conduit I've ever found is a pencil and paper.

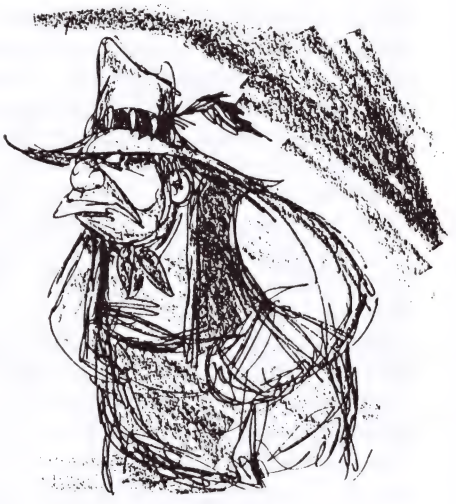
What are some of your own personal favorite sequences or scenes in the film?

I really love the nest scene, when Marahute shows her eggs to the boy and he really communicates with the eagle nonverbally. They relate so clearly, and yet the bird is never saying any dialogue. Cody asks the question, "Are they going to hatch soon?" And the bird just ruffles her feathers, like a real eagle does when it's proud. And the boy looks at that and understands that that's an affirmative answer. He just looks at her and smiles.

The way it was written in the original script she did speak. She was up there asking if the boy had brought the sardines. "Norwegian, my favorite," was her line. They sat up there and talked.

The communication of Marahute's emotions is particularly impressive, considering she doesn't have expressive eyes or or features.

That was a great achievement — the animator, Glen Keane, getting so much emotion out of a character that is a stern, scowling eagle. We just crossed our fingers and thought, "How's Glen going to do this?" And he somehow did it. He would find ways of tilting the head to sort of deemphasize the downward slant of the eyebrow. Just with little head gestures he could evoke a lot of sympathy.



I love the whole sequence of the bird getting caught at the cliff by McLeach, when he fires that rocket and it snares the eagle out the sky, and the boy is all worried. And you cut to McLeach up there jumping around, in one of the best scenes of the picture; this guy is just alive with delight and greed and victory. Just phenomenal acting, great reading from George C. Scott, and the animator did more to bring it to life. Duncan Majoribanks did that scene.

The layout guys, led by Dan Hansen with Rasoul Azadani and Bill Perkins, did a great job with all the spinning perspectives

This page: two early sketches of the villainous McLeach by Mike Gabriel (the second drawn when Danny DeVito was considered for the role). Opposite page: the finalized, George C. Scott-inspired McLeach, also by Mike Gabriel, and Marahute the eagle as drawn by her animator, Glen Keane. All art copyright © The Walt Disney Company.

and the boy jumping onto the bag and spinning off the cliff. The depth in those shots, the beautiful backgrounds. When it's over and McLeach is looking down on the eagle, I always notice this stillness in the air in the audience. They're just riveted at that point; they're absolutely breathless. That's when you know you're entertaining them,

and you've got their interest. Either that or they're bored stiff.

The scene of Joanna stealing the eggs from McLeach from his toolbox is remarkable. That scene was a lot of work by Duncan Majoribanks again. That was one of the first scenes he did with McLeach and it was a ninety-foot scene. It took him months and months to do his part, and then we had Dave Cutler do the Joanna part. Poor Duncan spends, I guarantee, at least three months on that scene of McLeach, and then Dave Cutler does his Joanna animation in three weeks and steals the scene!

You're spending the whole time looking at Joanna's eyes instead of McLeach. But the scene is very successful. They both worked very hard on pulling off the timing of it, too. We all were very involved: Hendel and I, and Dave Cutler and Duncan Majoribanks, in how to make it even funnier — just the care in every little frame of that scene shows.

It was a difficult scene to sell to the executives. They were worried because it was so long, for one thing. And we convinced them that this is just a straight, simple, almost silent-comedy bit where you just hold the camera still and let the situation develop and play.

There may be a lot of fans of the original Rescuers who are wondering why Evinrude wasn't featured in the sequel.

After the boy is saved at the end and flies off, we were going to cut to a wedding scene of Bernard and Bianca coming down the aisle with their little wedding outfits on. In the middle of this wedding, Evinrude shows up and comes buzzing in with a message from the Chairmouse: "Congratulations! P.S.: you're needed in Bora Bora immediately; forget the honeymoon."

It would have been a big kick to see Evinrude back on the screen. But he sort of got tossed out with the whole sequence, because we could not see ending another one of these films with a wedding. How many of these films are going to end with "dun-dun-dun-da...Here comes the bride?" Another Disney wedding.

All through this film we tried to always cut to something you weren't expecting. Whether it's Wilbur flying in the clouds with these flamingos, or when we cut back to the hospital and he's got a vice on his head. As soon as you know where you're going, then in you're trouble. As soon as you show the wedding outfit, you feel like, well, I've seen this a hundred times. And what more could you say? They are getting married, and you don't need to to see it. It was more Bernard's fear of proposing that was the problem, anyway. And she accepted and off they go.

We also had a strong sense of wanting to bring our own characters to the story, and create as many new personalities as possible and not try to milk the first film for all it was worth. We hoped we didn't need Evinrude. It was just that it would have been fun to bring him back for ourselves.

I almost wish we had pushed a few more of those little warm fuzzy buttons at the end of the movie. too, because we do take the audience through a lot of violence and tension, and maybe we should have milked the warm sweet stuff at the end a little more, just to let people feel like it was all worth it. But we also had what seemed like twenty stories to wrap up at the end. We've got the mother still waiting for the boy. We've got the boy to go home. We've got the eggs that are just now hatching — we've got to get the mother eagle back to those eggs. Okay, but we've got the boy who needs to see the chicks, too — he showed so much love for those eggs. Yeah, okay, we'll have the boy with the chicks, then he'll go home to mother. Oh, yeah, then he's got to free the imprisoned animals. I mean, you could easily add twenty minutes onto this film, and it seemed like the basic story was over once that boy was saved and the bad guy was gone.

What technical advances do you feel you've achieved in The Rescuers Down Under*?*

We've really been able to get a lot of production value in this film. We had an incredible art director, Maurice Hunt, and a great head of background, Lisa Keene, and once those two started kicking in visuals, the higher-ups really were impressed with it. They didn't say, "No, you can't do that because it's going to take too long or cost too much. They just said, "Let's get this on the screen, whatever we have to do."

I'm thrilled with the look of the film. It has so much shading — when you add shading to a scene, you're basically lighting it. You're given the cinematographer's tools, which normally in animation you can't have, if you have just a flat color to play with. You basically have to get it down on the background, and that's that. We've

approached this film as a very cinematic effort. You'll always see a shadow on the character for most of the film, and also a cast shadow from the character.

One of the things I am proudest of in this film is the return of the colored ink-line look, which gives such a softness to the characters, and such an appeal and a roundness. Instead of black or grey around every line around the character, now we can have a color — if Bernard is wearing a red sweater, the sweater has got a dark red line around it. If a character has a little round nose, then it's a little soft red line

around that, which gives everything a rounding effect also.

One thing I really got excited about was the ability to create innovation in our camera moves and in our visual storytelling techniques — to, in some ways, return to very expensive shots that were only used in the most elaborate Disney films, like "The Nutcracker Suite" in *Fantasia*, with all the little glowing characters and transparent leaves. Well, we got a little hint of that — we have a short moment in our film where the characters are riding on lightning bugs and they go behind leaves, and it glows and all.

And you have multiplane-type shots. It hints at what the future of animation is going to be all about. Right now, we're sort of stepping up to the great old quality look of the 1940s. And I think you'll see us in the next few years going beyond that in creating new and even more elaborate-looking movies and features than even the 1940s could muster.

Above: this early design for a restaurant patron was used instead for the Australian doctor character. Drawing by Chris Sanders. Copyright © The Walt Disney Company.

Where do you think today's generation of animators stands in relation to the achievements of the past?

I feel like our generation now is getting a chance to make our mark in the annals of animation history. That we're stepping out of the past's shadow now, because we're making our own statements and not just copying anymore. We're innovating a little bit. And when I say "we," I mean all of us in the animation field today. There are so many great features being done. Sullivan Bluth certainly was a large factor in pushing the genre into these new directions, because they were determined to put quality back into these films at any cost. And they found a way to do it at a relatively cheap cost, which is even more impressive.

How would you sum up the experience of directing an animated feature?

These films take so much more effort than anybody imagines. It's just staggering how many people have to do so much hard work to get these things made. It's easy just to assume that Disney's been doing these films so long that it must be easy to make them. It never is easy.

It's the commitment of these people that's just phenomenal to me. Because they have to do it year after year after year, and they all kick into overdrive and give it their all. That's how these films get done and that's how come they look good. Because people care enough to kill themselves for them.

Finally, what's your last word on The Rescuers Down Under?

It turned out to be a very exciting, involving, and different animated film. I think it's unique. So I'm very proud of it. ■

Miss Bianca's Comeback a Success: A Review of The Rescuers Down Under

Not long after *The Rescuers Down Under* opened, its initial ad campaign — which focused on Jake, the *Crocodile Dundee*-inspired Australian kangaroo rat — was replaced by one featuring the Australian boy Cody astride the eagle Marahute in moonlit silhouette The new ad blatantly copied the memorable ad for *The Little Mermaid* that showed Ariel atop a rock in moonlit silhouette.

That's a shame, because *The Rescuers Down Under* doesn't have that much in common with *Mermaid* — or, for that matter, with the earlier *Rescuers* film. Nor does it need to, really; this is a cartoon that's perfectly able to stand on its own.

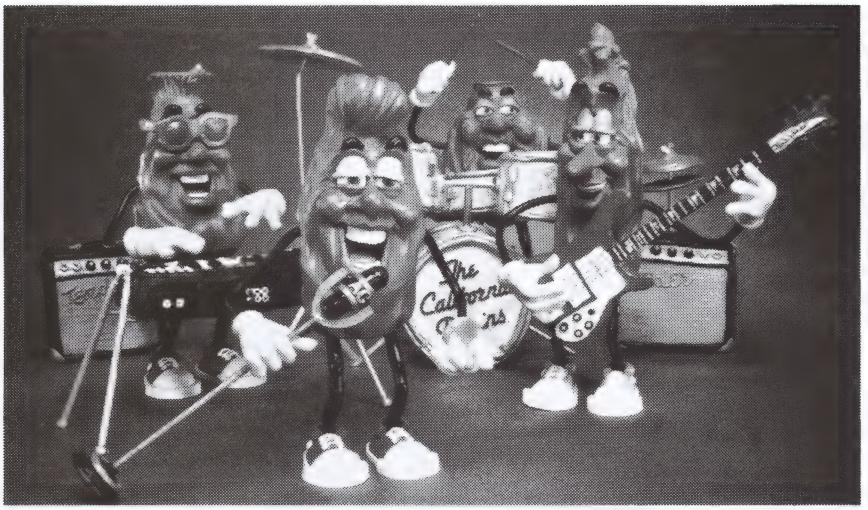
The basic concept of taking the protagonists of 1977's *The Rescuers* (one of Disney's most successful features only in a financial sense) to Australia is not a particularly compelling one. Miss Bianca and Bernard are pleasant but shallow characters; voiced by Eva Gabor and Bob Newhart, they're remnants of the Phil Harris era of Disney animation. This new story puts them in a quasi-Spielberg comedy-adventure; while it's a funny, exciting one, it rarely gets much deeper into its characters than such films tend to do (which isn't very far). The most interesting character relationship — between Cody (one of those earnest but rather bland little boys that Disney has animated frequently) and his eagle friend Marahute (superlatively expressive animation by Glen Keane) is fully explored in the first five minutes.

That said, *The Rescuers Down Under* is so consistently imaginative and charming that none of the above criticisms matter much, at least while you're in the theater watching the film. The storyrtelling is fresh and uncliched, avoiding the overly obvious reliance on inspiration from earlier Disney films that marred parts of *The Little Mermaid* and has bedeviled most of Don Bluth's work. A long series of scenes in which Cody's need of help is transmitted by mice across the world to Bernard and Bianca, who are dining in a swanky restaurant operated by insects, is the most whimsical, well-imagined ten minutes or so that Disney has done in ages. (It impressively takes an idea not too remote from the "Twilight Bark" of *101 Dalmations* and treats it quite differently.) The film fairly overflows with good supporting characters, most notably the villain McLeach's lizard crony Joanna. (McLeach himself is the beneficiary of a fine vocal performance by George C. Scott that makes him one of Disney's more sympathetic villains.)

Technically, the film shines. This is the first animated feature produced using the CAPS system, a technique (unpublicized by Disney) that colors each frame by computer, eliminating the use of cels. The look is as crisp and well-defined as that of any Disney feature of the 1950s, and the film's excellent art direction gives everything an organic feel that's in tune with the film's outdoorsy story. The good looks the computer coloring gives the movie are especially impressive considering that this is the process's first use; given time, CAPS could turn out to be the most important technical advance in animation since the introduction of color.

While one hopes that Bianca and Bernard will retire their screen partnership gracefully after this film (and that Disney will retire the idea of doing animated sequels), the partnership of directors Mike Gabriel and Hendel Butoy is off to a promising start indeed.

Harry McCracken



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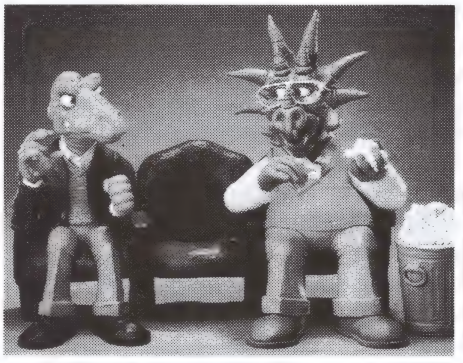
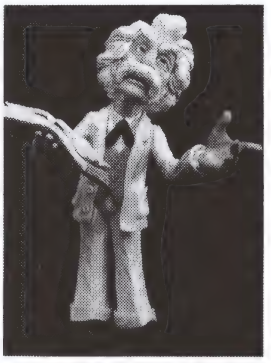


Herb and Rex in Theater Seats from Emmy Winning Christmas Special



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Stepping Into the Picture

An Interview With Maurice Noble

By Harry McCracken

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Maurice Noble's career in animation began at Disney in the 1930s, but he is undoubtedly best remembered as the designer who made so many of Chuck Jones's Warner Bros. cartoons from 1952 on some of the best-designed animated films of all time. Noble's association with Jones continued into his later work for MGM and Warner's; today, he creates serigraphs and speaks at animation studios. He also recently designed and co-wrote an episode of Tiny Toon Adventures.

I conducted this interview with Maurice Noble in January, 1991. It was edited for publication by Noble and me.

Harry McCracken

Above: Inspirational story painting by Maurice Noble for What's Opera, Doc?. *From the collection of Mike and Jeanne Glad. Opposite page: Noble meets fans at a Philadelphia Art Alliance exhibition of Disney art in October, 1990. (Marc Davis and Oliver Johnston are partially visible; Frank Thomas was also present.)*

Harry McCracken: *I should start by asking you how you got interested in animation in the first place.*

Maurice Noble: Well, I was doing design work for one of the largest department stores in Los Angeles, and I had designed a children's department for two Christmases. One of the scouts from Disney saw the work, and this scout had also known my work when I went to the Chouinard Art Institute. I think I had the first one-man watercolor show at Chouinard. I was asked to come out there and try out as a background painter, and that's how I got into the animation business.

Had you been interested in animation before that?

No, in fact being something of a highbrow [laughs], I hadn't paid much attention to it, although I guess I had seen and enjoyed *The Three Little Pigs*, which was a turning point for the Disney studios. I had never even *thought* of animation as a job or career. I had an attitude that it was kid's stuff. The kiddies got down in front and jumped up and down when you put on a cartoon, but the adult approach wouldn't be considered until the making of *Snow White*.

What they needed out there were people that could handle watercolor rendering for their backgrounds. I had been doing a very creative job, and designing all sorts of things from departments to all sorts of windows. I helped design the exterior of the building and all that. I went out there [to Disney] and sat down, and the first job they gave me was painting an apple with a wormhole in it. I thought, "Oh, what did I get myself into?"

This was pre-*Snow White*. The big product at that time were Silly Symphonies. We worked on *The Old Mill* and some of the things that led up to *Snow White*.

Did you enjoy animation right away, or did it take some getting used to?

I enjoyed the work, and was hooked. It was a challenge, because at the the time we were painting these backgrounds, every-

thing was done in transparent wash, and we weren't allowed to use any opaques at all. The Whatman paper was stretched on boards, and a pencil outline was traced. Then we were given a pencil rendering with precise detail of shadows and forms and so forth, and we had to transpose that into a color rendering.

There were certain guidelines that were set up, but we would be given a sequence of three or four or five or six backgrounds that tied together. You can imagine the difficulty of matching transparent washes with different backgrounds that would be cut from one to the other.

Was this a very creative job at this point, or were you mainly doing what somebody else told you to?

It was more or less following what somebody else told me to do, because the pencil renderings were very detailed and specific. We were creating a mood, and we had to exercise our judgement in that, but we were working within a framework. Every picture must have a framework: story, visuals, and music. A total composition.

You had to work within the Disney style.

That's right. Well, I doubt whether we'd call it a Disney style at that time. *Snow White*'s style was set up for that particular picture. I suppose in a sense it was realism, but realism with an overtone of Arthur Rackham or something like that.

I worked on *Snow White* and *Bambi*, I worked on the Stravinsky "Rite of Spring" sequence in *Fantasia*. I had screen credit on *Dumbo* as color coordinator. I might have painted one or two backgrounds on *Pinocchio*, but not a great deal, because I spent almost two years doing sketch work on *Bambi*, and that overlapped into *Pinocchio*.

Was that more interesting work?

Yes, that was completely creative work. I became fascinated by the potential of the medium. I was doing thumbnail sketches for mood and continuity and so forth, searching for a way to present the picture. Originally I worked with Gustaf Tenggren, who was a well-known illustrator. I worked about three months with him, and then I believe he left the studio and went back to New York.

About that time they were constructing their new studio in Burbank, and the *Bambi* unit was shifted over to a small building down in Hollywood on Seward Street. That's where we were isolated for almost two years. All I did on that particular picture was sketchwork; I probably did three or four thousand watercolor sketches for it.

As it finally appeared, my influence was probably minimal, because they decided to go with the approach that Tyrus Wong gave it — a certain Oriental flavor, if you recall the film. My view of the story of *Bambi* was more on the grand scale, and Tyrus's rendering and type of background seemed to lend itself to the intimate approach. My contributions were probably more indirect on the film.

Did you know Walt Disney well personally?

I wouldn't say that at all — did anyone? He was kind of a law unto himself, you know. I sat in the sweatbox with him and discussed color breakdown on characters and so on. When I was working on *Snow White*, I had a room that was sort of catercorner over from Walt's, and he could look over in my window and I could look in *his* window. I was working on the final sequence when the Prince awakens Snow White, and I'd be there sometimes to eight, nine, ten, eleven o'clock at night. Walt would say, "You still here, Maurice?" I'd say "Yes, I have a little something to finish up," and he'd say goodnight and leave. I think the whole studio was feverishly caught up in the *Snow White* production. But no intimate lunches or that sort of association with him.

How did you come to leave the Disney studio?

I left there by invitation. I was a member of the group that decided that the wage structure of the Disney studio wasn't fair, and so I went out on strike and consequently lost my job. This was a very traumatic experience: loyalty, opportunities, and finances were involved. Walt Disney set his standards high, and all credit should be give him, even though we went out on strike.

World War II was about to break out, so after Pearl Harbor I enlisted, through the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, in the Army Signal Corps; they were asking for technicians.

Were you glad that you ended up leaving the studio?

That's one of those moot points. I really feel I was able to be far more creative on my own, taking the route that I did. Disney has a tendency to over-refine their product, and in that way they lose a lot of their spontaneity and zip. By that I don't mean flashy zip, but the kind of a joyful quality that I found later in a lot of the really silly things we did at Warner Brothers.

Photo by Dave Mackey

Did you find that your Disney training gave you a good background for your later work?

Oh, yes. I really think the training was very valuable. I know that many of the young people in the business today work at Disney two or three years, and then they go on into the other studios. They should be commended today for uphold-

ing the quality of animation, which is not found in many of the other studios. The Disney studio still believes in drawing, which is the basis of animation.

I know that you worked on the Private Snafu cartoons during the war, so you were working on Warner cartoons several years before you actually joined the studio.

This was one of my first contacts with Warner Bros. The Signal Corps post was at the Fox studio; we called it Fort Fox.

I had been down in Louisiana, and we had the Signal Corps units down there. They were organized and then moved out overseas. I was in a position to take groups of men over to the the post theater to see Frank Capra's various films, and after watching them so many times I noticed the men were responding in the same general patterns. I set up a graph and tracked responses of the men all the way through. I thought, "Gee, this is real interesting stuff," so I sent it off to Colonel Capra.

After much waiting, all of a sudden I was transferred to Colonel Capra's organization in Hollywood. My commanding officer was Ted Geisel, who was famous as Dr. Seuss. It was a very creative bunch: we did the Snafu cartoons, we did propaganda booklets and leaflets, we did various warnings about health problems and venereal disease, we did charts that were inserts for Capra's films, when he was showing various battle movements and so forth It was a very productive small unit — perhaps ten men.

I was working on design and renderings and things of that kind. The story unit did the storyboards, and lots of times I would be called to design in black-and-white for the backgrounds. The story and the background designs were then shuttled off to Chuck Jones over at Warner Bros., and they would produce the cartoons as subcontractors.

You weren't working directly with Chuck Jones at this time?

I was over there a couple of times, but in a sense I wasn't directly working for him, because his layout men had to adapt our work. What I did, I assume, had some influence on the way the films were styled. As a matter of fact, I can barely recall what the films were about! [Laughs]

Oh, they're basically propaganda. Funny propaganda, but propaganda.

Well, I remember we did one about Japan, and one about German spies, and I don't know what else. They were all done in a comic-serious vein. They all had a message.

What did you do after the war was over?

I had some domestic difficulties and went back to Saint Louis and started to do filmstrips for an organization that was indirectly connected with the Lutheran church. I worked there a number of years. One day I got a call from Johnny Burton back at Warner Bros., asking if I'd like to have a job doing layout for Chuck Jones. I said, "Confirm it with a telegram and I'll be there." So that's how my wife and I came back to California, and subsequently I worked with Chuck for almost twenty years.

So you came in and out of the animation business a few times over the years.

Well, I was in the filmstrip business, but I was always involved with film. Oh, and I worked at the John Sutherland studios for a time. Warner Bros. closed its studio at one time [1953]; I, not knowing that the studio was going to close, took a job at Sutherland because I couldn't get a raise. I happened to leave the week before it closed; I didn't know anything about it, and everybody accused me of having inside information.

Sutherland was going to do a very important picture for U.S. Steel, and I was asked to come over there and design it. It was a film to inaugrate the large stainless-steel dome at the Pittsburgh ampitheater. We did the history of steel; I designed it and Eyvind Earle painted it. It was a fine picture.

While I was at Sutherland, we made one of the first films on cancer research for the Sloan-Kettering Cancer Institute in New York. We did some films for insurance companies. I remember one time I met John D. Rockefeller, Jr.; we must have been doing something for Standard Oil. It was a very interesting, top-drawer type of operation.

When you started with Chuck Jones, did you know right away that you had a job where you'd be able to experiment and do interesting things?

I guess I just kind of grew in the way I handled things. I'd always had in the back of my mind that super-realism in the backgrounds behind flat animation was not the right approach. So when I got the opportunity, I started to place more emphasis on shapes. I started to leave off the airbrush and create the spaces by shapes instead of a lot of fussy shadows and so forth.

I tried to create each frame to support the action, and not clutter up anything or interfere with a gag or bit of action. The style just evolved little by little. Chuck was an inventive director, and in retrospect I wonder how the heck we got away with a lot of the things we did. On the other hand,

Above and opposite page: Noble inspirational story art from the Private Snafu series. From the collection of Mike and Jeanne Glad.

as long as we turned out those Road Runners and Bugs Bunnys and all the various things that were our bread and butter, once in a while we could get in a *What's Opera, Doc?* or *Duck Amuck* or some of the more outstanding pictures.

I am a great believer in the idea that color and visual impact have a lot to do with the response of the audience. I would play for dramatic impact in both design and color, in terms of putting over a story point. No background is any good unless it's appropriate to the given situation or mood of the thing that's being portrayed.

I think in terms of *Claws For Alarm,* which is one of my favorite pictures, in which we did that old haunted hotel. A lot of dramatic shots and color were used to enhance the mood in that. *Boyhood Daze* and *From A to Z-Z-Z-Z,* the Little Ralph [Ralph Phillips] pictures, were sophisticated, useful approaches to design, simplified and supporting the young spirit of the films.

In *What's Opera, Doc?,* I did the sketches and Chuck built back into them. I quickly did away with the proscenium arch and everything, and let the audience move right in on the picture almost immediately. Then I treated it as super-grand opera and satire. It was kind of a tour de force.

Did you realize that you were working on a film that would come to be regarded as one of the best, if not the best, Warner Bros. cartoons ever made?

As it went along, I was aware that something was kind of happening. I put in a lot of innovative ideas, and I would get calls from the ink and painting department saying, "Now, you don't mean to say you're going to paint this character all red?" or something like that. I'd say, "Yes, that's the way we want it." And Chuck was backing me up on it.

As we sketched and designed and put this thing together, when we finally got it, it was just one of those things that came off. It could have been a pudding. This is one of those strange things about doing something creative: you take a big chance, and I suppose I could have been put out the front door if it had fallen on its face. But Chuck backed me up on it, and we have *What's Opera, Doc?* today. I still get a boot out of just watching it.

One of the things I find interesting about a lot of the films you worked on with Chuck Jones, especially during the late 1950s and 1960s, is that the graphic style is radically different from film to film. depending on the subject matter. What's Opera, Doc? *looks like no other Warner cartoon, and neither does* Robin Hood Daffy. *The Bugs Bunny cartoons that featured Witch Hazel have a look all their own, and so forth. That's not something you see in the works of other directors — were you consciously changing your style?*

Oh yes, this was very deliberate. I was trying to shape the style to fit the cartoon. The zany quality of Witch Hazel immediately suggested a zany approach: cupboards painted on the floor and up the wall, and so forth. She was a marvelous character, and certainly wouldn't be in a normal setup.

The same thing would hold true for *Robin Hood Daffy,* which was a slapstick Robin Hood. I hit on this free, fun style to support the free and fun slapstick quality of the film. I think one of the great moments of animation is that line when Daffy is sitting on Porky's lap, and they're laughing and laughing and laughing, and all of a sudden Daffy says, "How jolly can you get?" It's timed beautifully, and I look back on that as one of the great spots in animation.

I call it stepping into the picture. You look around and say, "Gee, what's this all about, and does it feel right for this given picture?" And then you go ahead and design from that standpoint. I'm not particularly aware that this is my style. This is the way it happens as I design and draw a picture. It was a conscious seeking after something that I thought would support the mood of a given picture.

So you were more interested in adapting to what was needed than forcing your style onto a cartoon.

Oh, absolutely, because I don't believe that any cartoon is successful when you force a design onto it. I think that this was one of the problems with UPA: they overdesigned. I talked to one gal who worked over there, and I said, "Gee, that was an interesting picture, but what was it all about?" And she just said to me, "Well, I had fun." This is not communicating the spirit of animation to the audience.

Were you influenced by UPA at all? I think animation fans tend to think that UPA influenced everybody with their stylization in the 1950s. Or were you moving towards being more stylized anyway?

I'll be very frank and say I don't believe I was influenced by UPA at all. I did my own thing. In fact, I refused to go over to UPA; I preferred to stay working with Chuck at Warner Bros. I think UPA outsmarted itself in overdesigning and being kind of smart-assed. In a sense they were walking in their hallowed artistic halls. I think I can honestly say that I've never designed anything that I didn't think was going to communicate to the audience. After all, you have to have an audience.

I'm not downplaying some of the good things. I think that Hubley's *Moonbird* is one of the charmers of the animation library. But if you ask me what films do I remember that they did at UPA, I can't really recall one.

Well, people remember Warner Bros. cartoons a lot better today than they recall UPA's.

Oh, yes. They'll say, "Did you work on *Duck Amuck*?" or "Did you work on *What's Opera, Doc?* "or "Did you work on those Road Runners?" or "What about that thing with all the mice in the hotel?" They remember the strengths and the fun of the Warner Bros. cartoons.

I can't think of any director other than Chuck Jones when he was working with you whose style changed so much from film to film. That wouldn't have happened at Disney.

I think that in the Disney mechanism, they're tied into the ghost of Walt. It's a fanciful realism. They've created a lot of beautiful pictures, but that's their way of doing it.

Did you especially enjoy working on some of the more abstract pictures you did during the 1960s, like High Note, Now Hear This, *and then later* The Dot and the Line *over at MGM?*

The Dot and the Line was built on Norton Juster's book. The adaptation of it tried to stick very close to the dialogue and development, but to put that over into moving graphics was a real challenge I think we got a good picture out of it.

I just consider each picture a challenge. If it calls for abstract, okay, let's go abstract. If it calls for sentimental, let's go sentimental. I think this is what good design is all about.

Did you feel like you were drawing on artistic traditions other than animation? I think you told me you felt a special kinship with Matisse.

Somebody asked me, "Who is your favorite artist?" and I said Leonardo da Vinci. They were kind of aghast. But when you think about it, here is a man who was inventive, who could draw, who had a sense of color and drama and composition. He was really ahead of his time in terms of so many things. I can't say that any particular artist directly influenced me. You take in a lot of material, and then your subconscious takes over.

I really do believe that that the designers and people who have worked with animation have created their own genre of art. I'm not trying to take any credit, but I really think we were innovators. We were designing in terms of length. All these other designers and painters were designing a composition in terms of a static viewpoint, and we were teasing the eye with the way the color and the actions and the accents happened in a continuity on the screen, so in the end we got a total composition. This is something that had never been done in the graphic world before.

There is a very definite relationship between animation and music. One entertains the eye, and the other, the ear. Both

touch the emotions.

Was there a character or series that you enjoyed working on most?

I enjoyed working on the Little Ralph pictures, because I thought they were gentle, imaginative, and *tender* little pictures.

Was there a reason why there were only two of those?

I don't know about that. Whether that's the sum of what Chuck wanted to do with him or somebody put their foot down, I don't know. In the chain of command, one never knows.

Chuck did a couple of things with the Three Bears, and I heard the story that it was previewed up at Hearst's Castle; he had a theater up there and a bunch of guests. Somebody announced that "Now we're going to have a cartoon about the Three Bears," and some dodo gal up there said, "Oh, not another story about the Three Bears." This got to Warner Bros., and they said to never make another Three Bears story.

Were you at Warner Bros. up until the time that the animation studio closed down?

Oh, yes. As a matter of fact, I was there after Chuck left. We did *The Incredible Mr. Limpet*, and I was designing and Phil DeGuard was painting backgrounds, and Friz Freleng and Hawley Pratt were doing a lot of the directing on the animation. I remember working with Johnny Burton, Jr. on the wonderful matte shots that he did. Considering the almost primitive equipment that we had at Warner Bros., it's a marvelous job of matting of the live action and the fish.

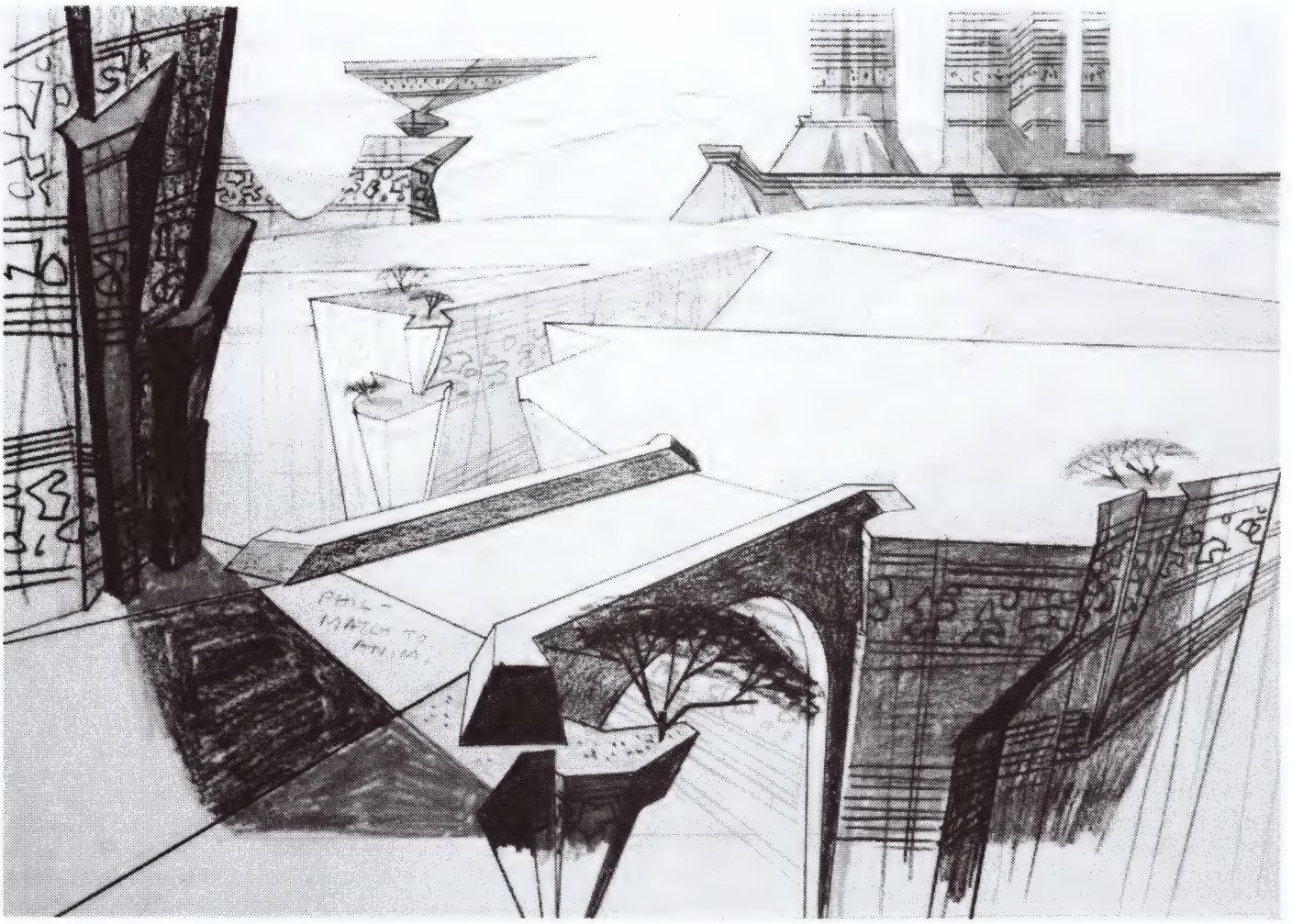
That was during the last days of the Warner animation studio. You must have gotten back together with Chuck Jones fairly soon after that, since you worked together at MGM.

I was there with him when he started up with Tower 12, which became the MGM [animation] studios. We did *The Phantom Tollbooth, The Bear That Wasn't, The Dot and the Line...*

On some of those films and the later Warner Bros. cartoons, you were credited as Chuck Jones's co-director. Was that because design had become more important, or had your role in production changed?

Lots of times, the credit of co-direction would show up and I wouldn't even know I'd been given it. I would go in and check the animators, maybe sit in on a recording session. I was just all over the place, kind of pulling things together, ironing out a lot of spots while Chuck was going ahead with the next picture. I really don't recall a role as co-director. Someone called me the catalyst.

Above and opposite: Elmer Fudd calls on the forces of nature in two more Noble inspirational story paintings from What's Opera, Doc?. From the collection of Mike and Jeanne Glad.



Above: layout drawing by Maurice Noble for a cartoon in the Road Runner series. From the collection of Mike and Jeanne Glad.

I think you told me when we were talking before that you feel the role of the layout artist has changed in animation in recent years.

This is what I've observed, from what little I've been back in the studios. A rough sketch is made of the background, and the layout man in a sense is the animation layout man. He just turns the animation with a rough layout over to the background person, and they paint a background. I suppose it gets some okay somewhere along the line.

The person who designed the picture doesn't have control over how it looks, which I think is a great loss. If you're designing a picture for mood, you have to follow through on the thing. That's what I've always insisted upon when I'm working on a picture: if I'm designing it, I'm going to see that that's the way it gets on the screen.

Their present mode of operation is one of such rush. Produce it and get it out, and jump on the next one. How do you do three stories in a week, like some of these studios do? Their pride in a picture is almost lost.

You were lucky that you didn't have to do that many films a week. You didn't need to do sixty-five episodes a year.

Listen, we did an *appalling* amount of work. [Laughs] Chuck and I produced eleven short subjects a year, but think of the amount of work that went into that: story, character sketch by Chuck, and my design work, and all the animation and ink and paint and dialogue and music scoring and sound effects.

That was done for eleven pictures a year by a small crew: there was Chuck Jones, Mike Maltese, myself, Phil DeGuard the marvelous background man, and I think we had three animators and three assistants. Ten to twelve people producing all these short subjects.

It must have been a lot easier to keep tight control over the look of a cartoon when you worked with a small crew like that.

Not only was one able to keep more control over it, but there was also the esprit de corps and the spontaneity of the thing that made these Warner Bros. cartoons what they are. They're considered the fun classics. Our input was important, and we felt responsible and proud of our work on them.

It's what I call the interference of the walnut desk with the creative process at the studios today. They want this character or that character because they're going to make a plastic doll out of it. Consequently, this is worked into the story whether you want it or not. Inexperienced people are sitting up there behind that walnut desk making decisions on the pictures, and they're really not the creative personnel. I've not only experienced it myself; I've gotten this from *very* talented people, at the Disney organization, and other organizations too.

They've put the cart before the horse, and I think it's resulted in some instances in a very low-grade, semi-animated cartoon. These pictures are going to kill off the industry. There's no indepth analyzing a character to even develop a personality. It's smash, bang, boom, crash. The cartoons today dote on violence and an almost cruel sense of humor.

I'm kind of on my soapbox regarding this. By cluttering it up with a lot of fast, fast, fast gags, they make people think they've seen something, and they really haven't. There's no time for development.

Do you think there's room for good work in the kind of limited animation that's done for TV today?

Yes, I do. I think one of the really big successes is the Charlie Brown series done by Bill Melendez. This animation is certainly limited, but look at the charm of the things. I think one of the great moments of animation history is when Linus reads the Christmas story on the Christmas program. I watch it every year, and I get a lump in my throat every time. It's so utterly charming and direct and simple: simple staging, simple dialogue, the tone of the voice. And this is very simple animation, but it's the way it's done, and it's in character with their voices and what they're doing. Let's just say they have "love."

This is one example of limited animation being done in an appropriate way. I think the Europeans in some of their films succeeded in doing it; I think back to a Yugoslavian thing called *Ersatz*. A great design thing, but in a sense it's almost limited animation. It's the quality of thought that goes into the thing. It's the quality of approach, and dialogue, and story construction. There's no cartoon unless you have a good storyline.

And good characters.

Good characters, well that's right. If you have a good character and you build a good storyline around it, then you have a cartoon. This is one of the things they did at Warner Bros. I always thought of Daffy and Bugs and Pepe LePew and all of them as people. I didn't think of them as cartoon characters; I thought of them as individuals. I could sit back and laugh at a lot of stuff that would come out of Daffy's mouth. "What's this little smartass up to?"

I can't warm up to these [new characters]: smash, bang, pose, blink-of-the-eyes, then zip off and crash offscreen, and shake everything, then you pick up on them and they're crosseyed and stars are whizzing around their head. This type of thing is the cheapest approach.

We've had a couple of generations of children that were raised on cruelty and violence. These kids sit and look at it for four hours a day. You wonder what kind of responses they're developing. I really wonder; I really worry. But when they talk about what they really like — these are the kids that watch all the shoot-up live-action and cartoons — it's Bugs Bunny and Daffy Duck and Mickey Mouse and these gentle things. I think we created some classics, kind of like Aesop's fables.

I think *Who Framed Roger Rabbit* is a very cruel picture. And it's an *unkind* picture. There's nothing funny about laughing at a half-wit.

Well, there's not a lot of humanity in it.

No humanity at all in it. This is why I worry. My neighbor moved just before Thanksgiving, and I went up to say goodbye. He introduced me to the young moving man, saying I had worked on *Snow White* and all these various things. The guy was duly impressed, and then he turned to me and said, "Did you work on *Roger Rabbit*?" Really, almost hostile. I said, "No, I didn't." He said, "I took my little girl to that, and it was a *cruel* picture."

A lot of people would say that the Road Runner pictures were cruel and overly violent. I don't agree, but they do say that.

I've heard the same thing, but what happened to the Coyote was that he got his comeuppance for whatever he did; everything backfired on him. It soon became understood that he was indestructible. I'm not defending the violence of the Road Runners, but I think this was the reason it was more acceptable.

The funny thing is, I imagine a lot of the people who work on these new films you're talking about feel that they're influenced by the Warner Bros. films you worked on.

I've had the opportunity to talk a number of times with groups, most recently at the Disney studios, and there's a real hunger among these young animators and designers to really do some good work. They really want to get in there and do good animation, good stories, good gags, and so forth. But the word comes down across the walnut desk: "We have to have three pictures out this week." So the crew works like crazy and gets their three pictures out, but they don't stop to look back at it, because "Oh well, it's going to be sent over to be done in the Orient, and who knows what we're going to get back, anyway." There's no esprit de corps. I think there's a lack of personal satisfaction on the part of the people who are trying to do the creating today. They're so remote from the final product.

This is one thing that we were fortunate in with our comparatively-small crew at Warner Bros: everybody knew that we were depending on everyone else to really deliver the goods. And this resulted in a lot of these gems of cartoons. I didn't know that we were doing that at the time, but in retrospect this is evidently what we did.

Are you surprised that the interest has continued in your work, and that people are writing books and magazine articles about what you did?

Oh, I'm constantly surprised. I meet a lot of people that know more about what I've done then I do. I was speaking to [Steven] Spielberg — we had met — and I told him it was an honor to meet him, and he said it was an honor to meet me, and we had a nice exchange of conversation. Somehow design came up, and I said, "I always designed stuff to please myself." He got that kind of quizzical look on his face, and I said, "Well, you can't really expect anyone to like something unless you like it yourself."

This is what Chuck and our crew and I were doing: we were turning out cartoons to please ourselves. In that way we got a certain spirit to them that came across to the audience, and they joined in the fun. If you get too darn remote from a given creative project, all of a sudden it becomes sterile. I think this is what has happened in the studios today.

I really do believe that animation is a unique and wonderful artform — I hate to make it an American artform, but I really think that's where it developed. I think it has vast possibilities; I'd like to see a museum where you could go in and sit down and see *What's Opera, Doc?* or *The Dot and the Line* or any of the other short subjects, just as you go into a gallery and see static pictures. I think it would be very popular, and it may happen someday. People would come out of a museum laughing — wouldn't that be great! ■

Dateline: Streamline

For producer Carl Macek, *Robotech* had been a career highlight. The series had introduced the American public to the wonders of Japanese animation, with its dynamic camera angles, intelligent stories, and engaging characters. *Robotech* had spawned a ton of merchandise, a series of novels and comic books, and a fan following that exists to this day. But Harmony Gold, the producers, lost financing to make new episodes, and eventually lost interest in the show.

In 1987 Macek left Harmony Gold to pursue other interests, working for DIC Enterprises for a year. He describes this experience as "frustrating" as well as "enlightening."

"In that year I was able to develop, with Duane Capizzi, an interesting television show called *C.O.P.S.* I then watched an interesting show get butchered by a system epitified by DIC — a.k.a. traditional American television animation," he says.

"The concept of *C.O.P.S.* would have been great had they allowed it to be strong. But they didn't. The company's 'brass' punked out when they opted to make it funky. Being one of the key persons who developed the story, I eventually got myself into a lot of trouble by trying to stick to my guns. The result: I was taken off the project as head story editor, but they eventually realized that they had to keep me on because I was the only one who knew the names of the characters.

"I was allowed to write 17 episodes under my own name, and then I rewrote about a dozen or so episodes that were really pretty bad. At the height of production I had to rewrite an episode in a day. A few of the episodes were, I thought, pretty good, but by and large it was a very weird experience.

"Then I decided, this isn't right. I took the money that I had earned working for DIC and I opened up Streamline Pictures with Jerry Beck. Our first goal was to build a company geared to distribute Japanese animation in the United States. Our philosophy is to try to take programming we think will have value in the American market, translate it authentically, give it spin, and present it in a way that is easy to enjoy."

Streamline's first imports were *Laputa: Castle in the Sky, Twilight of the Cockroaches*, and *Akira*. In an effort to make their operation profitable (by cutting ad and print costs), Streamline releases only a few prints at a time.

"The [problem] is, that if it's popular in one theater, and it's held over, then maybe another theater in another city might have trouble getting their print," Macek says. "Our operation is totally legitimate; it's above-the-board in every way...every dollar earned by these movies is reported to the Japanese and so everybody's happy."

The first movies that Streamline translated were Hayao Miyazaki's *My Neighbor, Totoro* and *Kiki's Delivery Service*. Macek describes these authentic translations as representative of "the true philosophy we have in regard to Japanese animation." Neither film has been announced for theatrical or video release in the States, although *Kiki* played on Japan Air Lines flights in the winter of 1989-90.

Said Macek, "Tokuma is weighing all other offers, including ours, and our offer is limited, as far as the scope of what we want to do with the material, and they're looking at other aspects of it."

Last September, Streamline began releasing *Lensman*, based on E.E. "Doc" Smith's Galactic Patrol. The movie boasted a $5 million budget, spectacular special effects, and revolutionary (at the time) computer graphics.

"Interestingly enough, the very first time I saw the *Lensman* movie, it was the very first time that 'Robotech' [sic] was ever shown," Macek says. "It happened at the World Science Fiction Convention in Anaheim several years ago. I had done, in English, a compilation of the first three episodes of *Macross*. It was playing in a video room, and it was on that same day that *Macross* was happening, I was sitting in the convention theater watching *Lensman* and I was overwhelmed; it was a magnificent film. Ever since, I kept trying to get Harmony Gold to get *Lensman*. Well, the last thing they got before I left was the rights to *Lensman*. They made two films from the property. One was a compilation of the first six episodes of the series, which

Streamline Pictures partners Carl Macek (this page) and Jerry Beck (opposite page).

Carl Macek on Streamline Pictures and Life After Robotech

By Bob Miller

by and large worked together as a story. They cut out flashbacks and things that would be redundant, and made, I guess, a fairly competent movie [*The Power of the Lens*]. I have not seen it. Then the second thing *Lensman* turned out to be was the theatrical feature, which was edited down from its 107-minute length to 82 minutes, and retitled *The Secret of the Lens*. They also changed the music.

"Well, when Jerry Beck and I started Streamline, one of the films that we wanted to deal with was *Lensman*. And we negotiated in earnest and finally made a deal February of 1989 to theatrically-release *Lensman*. When we saw the version of it that exists, we realized that we were not going to be able to release it that way because it had been cut radically, and it wasn't strong enough to be a theatrical release. We requested the original Japanese producer to give us the right to go back in and reconstruct the film to its original length and its original soundtrack (done the way we feel it should have been done).

"Well, negotiations went back and forth, back and forth. It was February of '89; in March of 1990 we finally got a FAX saying that we'd have the elements on March 29."

Under Macek's supervision, and the dialogue direction of Steve Kramer, Streamline translated *Lensman* as originally intended, the complete 107-minute-length film with six-track Dolby surround sound.

Macek describes *Lensman* as, "an experiment in restraint. What we tried to do with *Lensman* is to completely follow the script of the original Japanese writer. And even though he deviated from the Doc Smith storyline, we felt that it would be more fair to the filmmakers to deal with their story than try to superimpose a Doc Smith-esque story to it. We feel that the film captures the flavor of Doc Smith's stories very nicely.

"Reviewers that see *Lensman* oftentimes have mixed expectations. Some of them feel as though anything after *Akira* is anticlimatic. They miss the point of this particular film. To my way of thinking, *Lensman* is probably one of the most entertaining films made in recent Japanese animation history. It's very exciting, very bright and colorful in its outlook and in its storytelling. I think it's a masterpiece of contemporary Japanese animation.

"Other reviewers looking for the next breakthrough in terms of Japanese animation miss the boat," Macek says. "They don't see the entertainment value that's in this film. I think that the whole controversy about it being a *Star Wars* ripoff will fade away and people will just look at it as what it is.

"Hopefully if the film is successful, our plan is to do something with the *Lensman* television series. And certainly we've gotten requests for doing that from a major video company. You know, it's a long road to hoe."

Kodansha had also produced a *Making of Lensman* film, which, according to Macek, is not likely to be translated for release here — at least, not in its present format, due to previous copyright entanglements.

"A lot of people own the rights to that particular documentary and it's very difficult working out all of the various contractual obligations," Macek admits. "My plan was to ultimately make an original documentary on it. We may still do that, because there is some unique production point-of-view in the making of *Lensman*."

Aside from serving as co-founder of Streamline Pictures, Macek found time to produce a made-for-home video called *Computer Warriors*, released in May 1990. Macek co-wrote the video with Bill Kroyer, who directed it.

"Basically *Computer Warriors* was a work-for-hire that I did at Kroyer Films for Mattel Toys," Macek recalls. "It was an opportunity to produce original animation using techniques that have not been done before. The overall story can best be described as '*TRON* in reverse.' A bunch of guys that live in a computer-based reality are thrown into the real world and have to learn to cope with the problems of being confronted by dogs, toasters, washing machines, and things they have absolutely no idea what they are.

"It was designed by Vicki Jensen and laid out by Ed Bell and several other people

who worked at Ralph Bakshi's *Mighty Mouse* series. The look is very bizarre. It's best described as a contemporary-styled story. So if it's effective at any level, it's due to the fact the animation is engaging and the story propels you along in a rapid-fire way, which is all you can hope to do anyway. So far everyone who's seen it has liked it. It's sold 175,000 copies on home video already. Pretty amazing," Macek says.

In addition to importing Japanese animation, Streamline Pictures is making available actual cels from these productions. "Initially we're offering original animation art from *Akira* and in 1991, we'll start to sell art from *Robot Carnival*," Macek says. "As we pick up productions — depending on the time in which these films were produced, if the animation still exists — we'll negotiate with producers to bring this artwork into the United States and market it at a reasonable price. We're trying to give an alternative to people that want to buy animation art that don't want to spend $150 for a cel from a TV show. Cels from animated feature films have higher-quality art done by better animators, and reflect the art of animation more than a television show. So far the response has been very good."

Streamline is making these cels available through specialty shops, by mail order, and at conventions.

Yet another new Streamline project involves bringing Japanese animation to the home videocassette market. Their first release is a 48-minute documentary on *Akira* called *Akira: Production Report*, dubbed into English by Macek, released last fall. The video retails for $24.95 and is available at "finer" comic book shops around the country, and at theaters showing *Akira*.

Streamline is also releasing the movie *Akira* on home video, spearheading a new label called "Video Comics."

"Video Comics is an attempt to release videotapes of key Japanese animation into the United States, distributed initially to specialty retail shops on a monthly basis," Macek explains. "It's our attempt at doing OVA-style animation introduced to the specialty retail market, dubbed into English, as opposed to being subtitled.

"By releasing *Akira* on videotape it can stop, or put a dent in, the operations of the major video bootleggers. We want to send a message to the people that watch Japanese animation which says, basically, that this stuff is going to be made available in English, on video, at a reasonable price. So you can buy it, and see it in a way that maximizes your enjoyment of it."

The first Video Comics series will be *Zillion*, a science-fiction action series. Each cassette will contain one episode, retailing for $14.95. The first five episodes will be released one per month, beginning January 1991.

"We're doing things that are really unique. We're making tapes available to the specialty retail market first," Macek says. "It's not going to traditional home video stores first. The only place you can see them is to buy them through specialty retail outlet or direct mail. It's a way that was done originally with *Robotech*. When you go back to the roots of *Robotech*, you'll discover that it began as an 'OVA' sold through the mail and specialty retail shops as a home version of *Macross*. There were three episodes of *Macross*, tied together on one tape that cost $39.00. We're selling one episode of *Zillion* for $14.95.

Originally, *Red Beam* (*Photon*) *Zillion* aired in Japan in 1987, produced by Tatsunoko Studios (the animators of *Macross*). The series was produced by a staff initially assembled for *Robotech II: The Sentinels*. When that project was cancelled, the crew was able to switch over to *Zillion*, based on a toy line created by Sega, the electronics company. In all, 31 episodes were broadcast, followed by an Original Animation Video released in June 1988, called *Burning Night*.

Macek describes the Zillion gun "like a Lazer Tag-type of toy. A kid got a gun and vest that was a target, and would run around the back yard firing at another costumed kid with a gun and target on his chest. It was a really fun toy that addressed most of the problems of the original Lazer Tag system. Unfortunately, Zillion never got a start in the United States due to the failure of Lazer Tag. Lazer Tag had a lot of returns; it was a high- priced ticket item. It never really caught on. The problems that Lazer Tag had were solved with this Zillion toy, but the geniuses who control marketing strategy in the United States, being who they are, decided that any other toy similar to Lazer Tag really wouldn't meet the market. Subsequently Sega released two videogame cartridges for their master system with characters which appear in the cartoon. Hopefully, when we do the English version of it, we will introduce American audiences to this excellent series."

The story takes place in the 23rd Century on the distant planet, Maris, which is settled by human colonists. Maris' solar system is attacked by a race of aliens, the Noza, who also want to colonize the planet. The army sends a team of freedom fighters, The White Knights, to battle the Noza with a mysterious alien gun powered by an energy source named "Zillion." The Zillion gun is the only weapon that can destroy the aliens.

The White Knights include J.J. (Doug Stone), a flamboyant teenager who often needs rescuing by Champ (Kerrigan Mahan), an agent from the military, and Apple (Barbara Goodson), a daring intelligence agent. Their main antagonist is Baron Ryxx (pronounced "Ricks"), the alien commander obsessed with destroying our

From Robot Carnival.

heroes.

By selling Zillion as a home video, Macek hopes to avoid restrictions as to the kind of language used in the show, and the type of subject matter.

"It's going to be very authentic to the Japanese, but done in a similar fashion to what people like best about *Robotech*. It's going to have snappy dialogue and well-acted character voice actors, that kind of thing," he says.

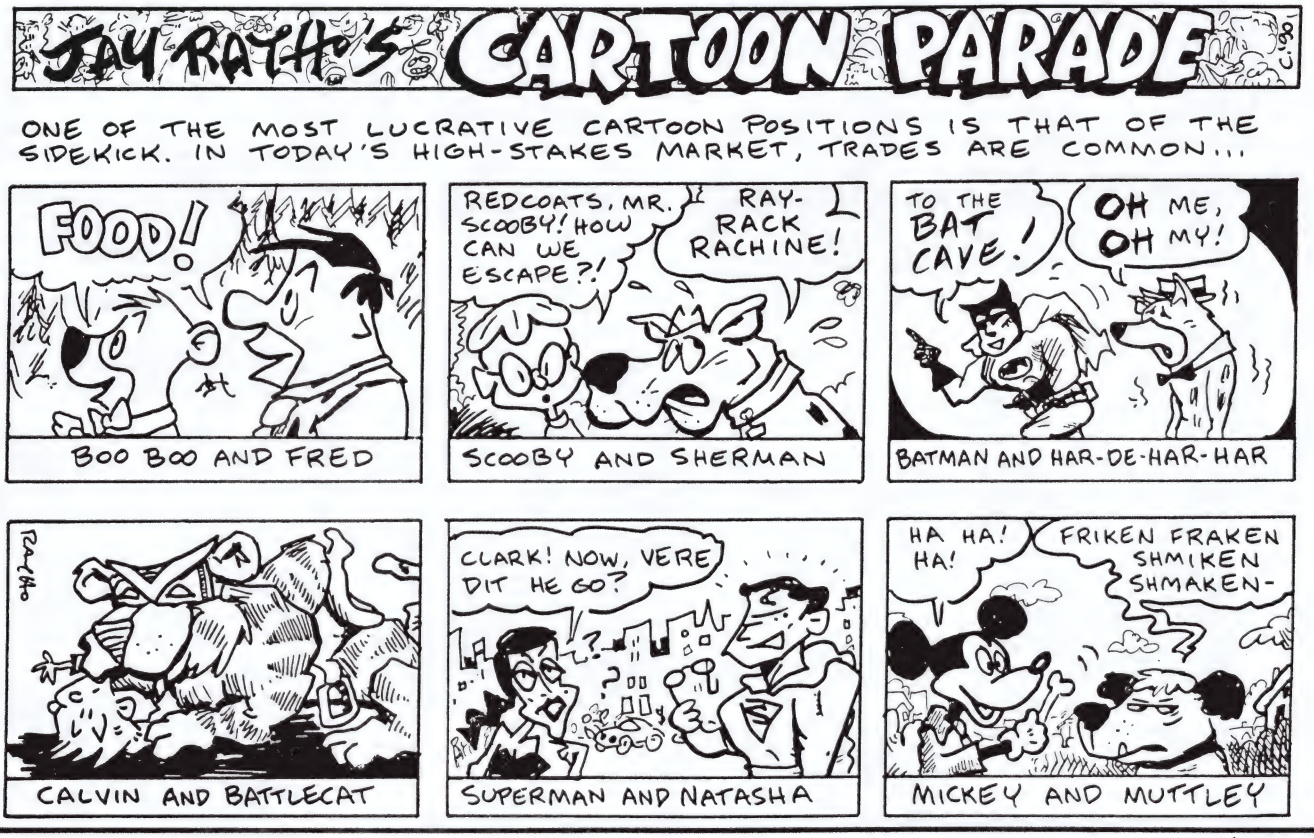
"It will be, hopefully, *Robotech* for a new generation. That's our goal; we're trying to repeat the success, the impact that *Robotech* had. *Zillion* does not have as vast a canvas as was present in the original Japanese stuff that was turned into *Robotech*, but, the animation is very good, and the characters are very engaging. So, hopefully, through the course of the experiment with *Zillion*, we *might* get something that has a similar feel and a similar appeal."

From Lensman.

Carl Macek reveals more projects in the works from Streamline Pictures: "We're negotiating right now with several OVA producers," he says. "I feel that in the next several months we'll be releasing OVAs on a regular basis. We've made a deal to release *Robot Carnival* to the theaters starting in the beginning of 1991. We're in final negotiations for *Fist of the North Star*, the theatrical feature. And we're working to develop new projects with Japanese studios from scratch. So we're going to have a heavy workload.

"We've also started to look internationally beyond Japan to bring films to the United States. We're working to bring Soviet and Eastern European animation into the country. We're going to try to become an animation clearing house, to get people to see lots of foreign animation.

"Basically, we're trying to aggressively bring the stuff into the market in a way that should have been done about five years ago," Macek says. "It was kind of sidetracked with the relative success of *Akira*. With *Lensman* and *Robot Carnival* we're going to be bringing animation out in a way that does justice to the material. Hopefully more people will see it and more people will begin to understand what other people like in it." ■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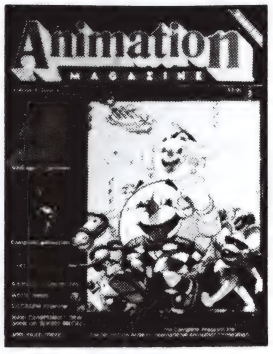

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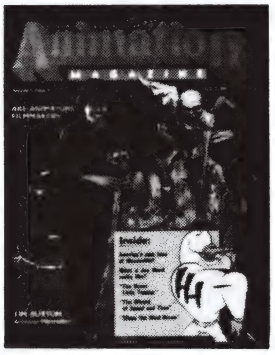

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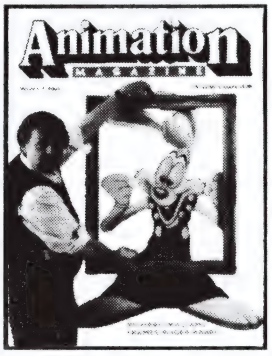

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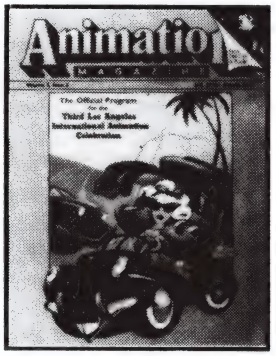

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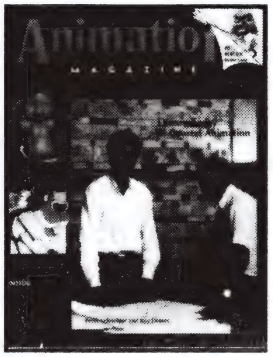

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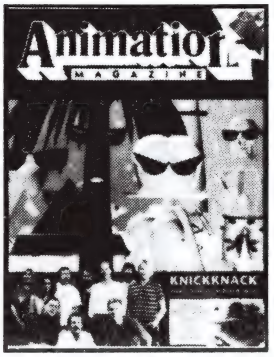

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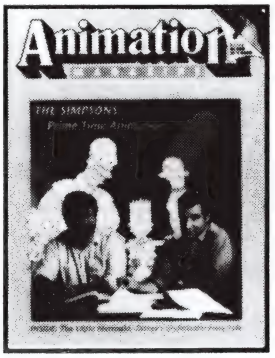

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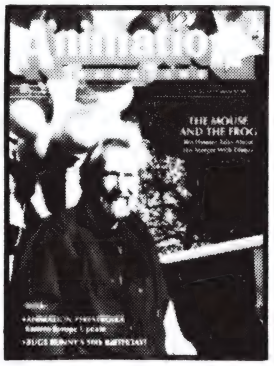

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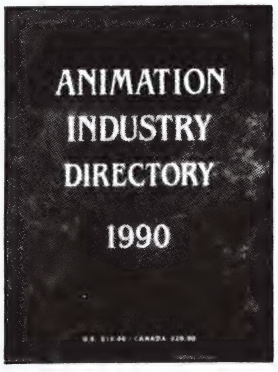

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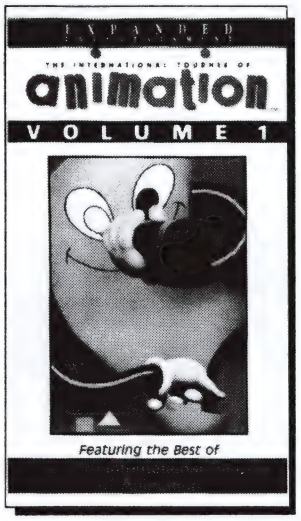

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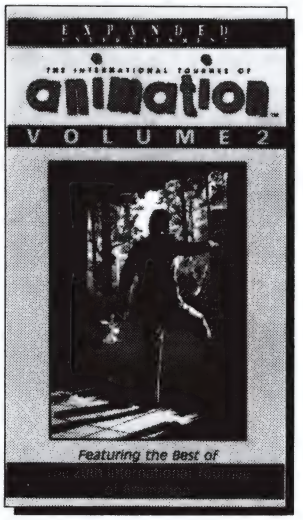

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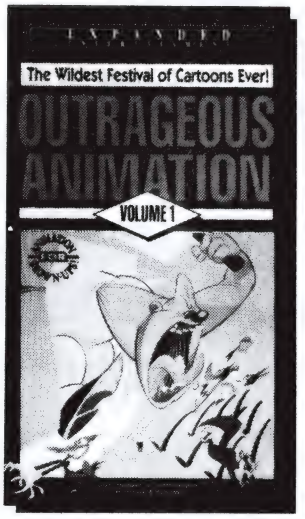

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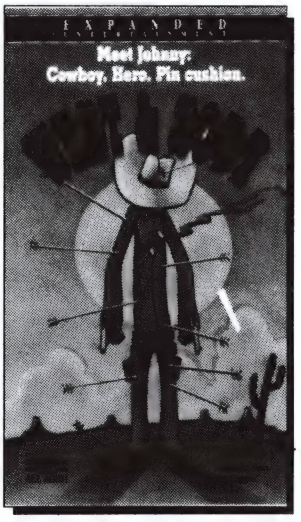

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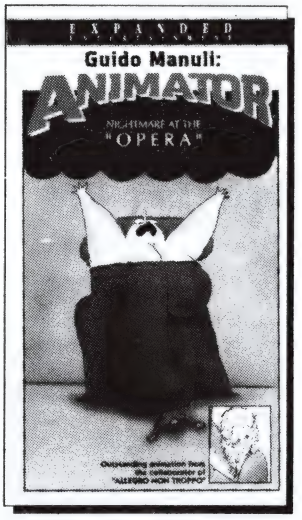

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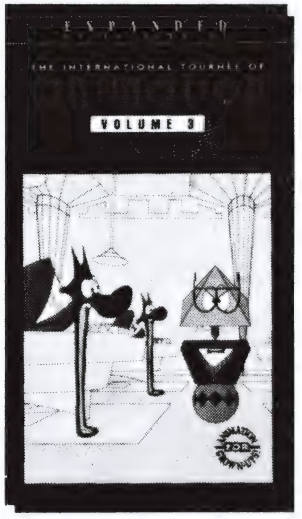

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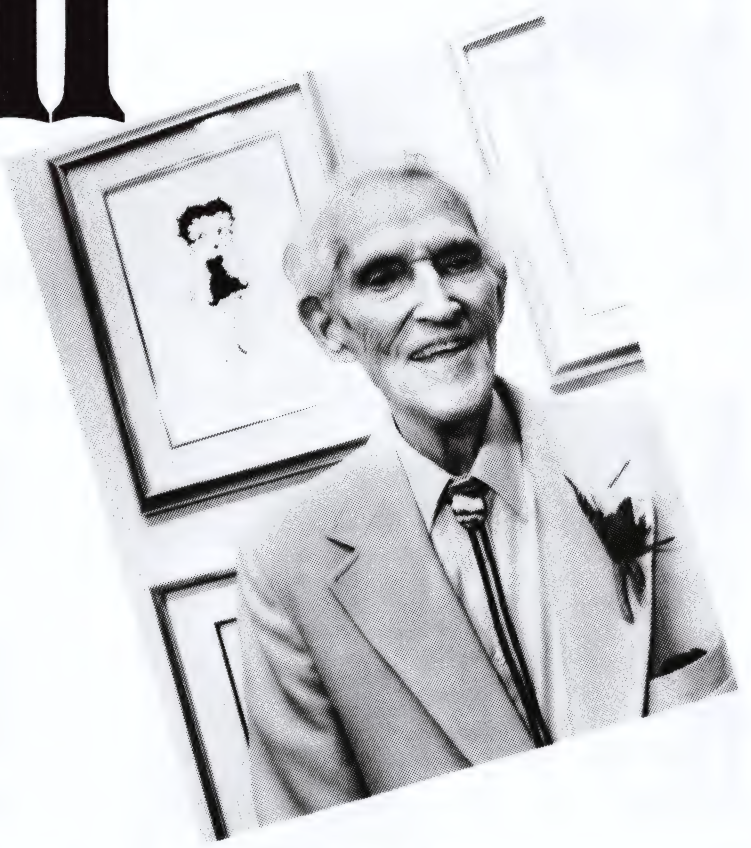
Remembering Grim



Not many people live to see their hundredth birthday; how many of those that do mark it by giving a vigorous and funny speech before more than five hundred wellwishers? Grim Natwick did, and it was a memorable and fitting cap to his seventy years in and around the animation business. (Those that weren't able to make the party can experience it thanks to a fine videotape that will be available from Bosko Video shortly; see their ad elsewhere in this issue for details.)

Even though when we began planning this feature it was as a birthday tribute rather than a memorial, there doesn't seem much reason to dwell sadly on Grim's passing last October. That this man's remarkable career and the history of animation are essentially synonymous is as much a reminder of how young the artform is as it is a celebration of how long Grim Natwick lived.

Harry McCracken

Grim's Last Interview

By John Province

On March 11th, 1990 I enjoyed the honor of conducting Grim Natwick's last formal interview, for my forthcoming book of animation interviews. Thanks are in order to Mr. Marc Davis, who was invaluable in helping me locate Mr. Natwick and who graciously permitted me to use him as a reference. Kind words should also be extended to Mr. Natwick's caregivers, the French family of Santa Monica, California, who made his last years comfortable and filled with affection. I have no doubt that it was the kindness and friendship of these good people that kept Grim Natwick among us a bit longer.

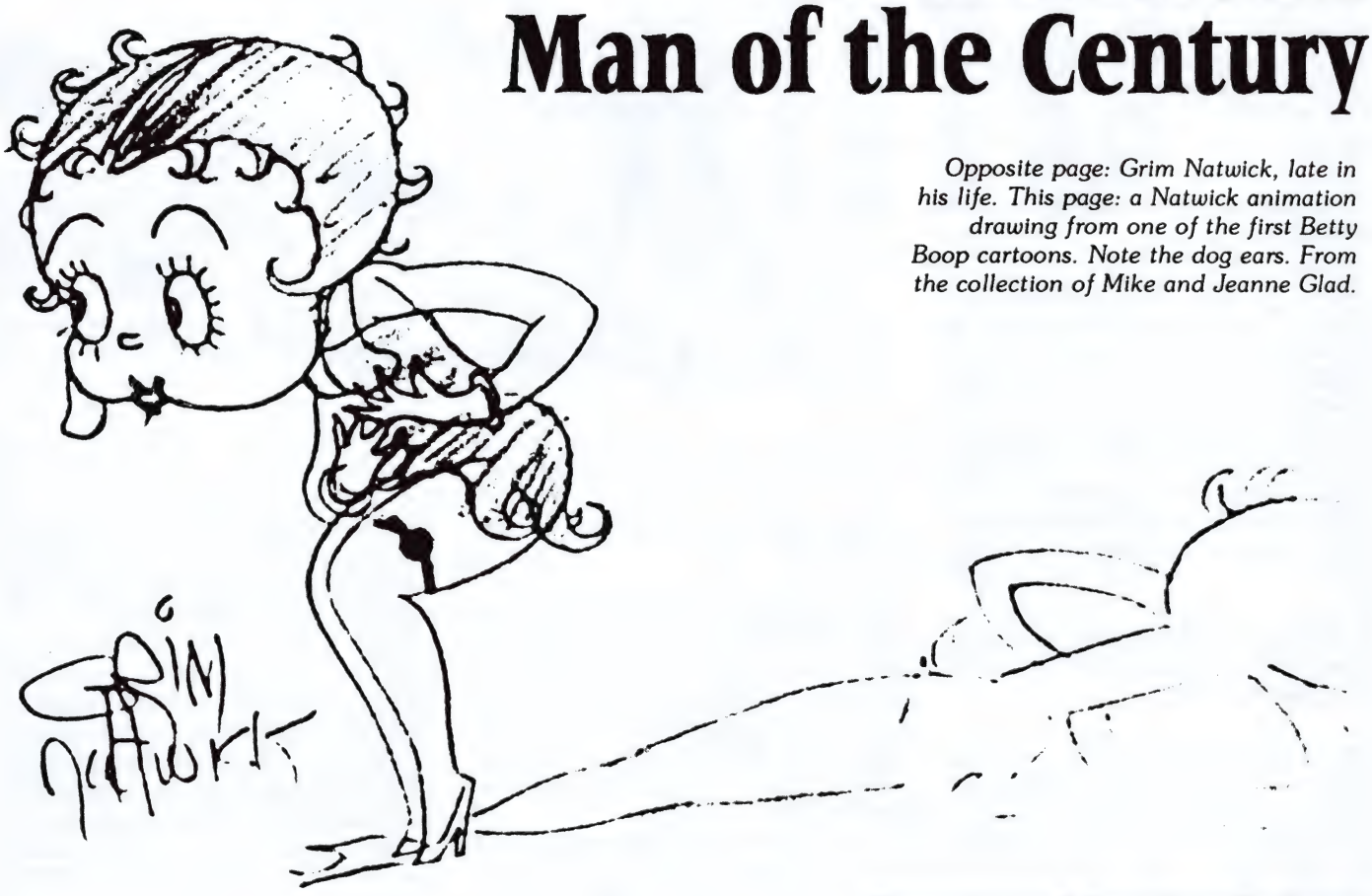
John Province

John Province: *Could we talk a bit about how you got into animation?*

Grim Natwick: I received a telephone call from Gregory LaCava, with whom I'd roomed for a semester in art school. William Randolph Hearst, the old newspaper monarch, was insane about animation and wanted to open his own studio. He'd interviewed LaCava and must have taken a liking to him, because he put him in charge of the whole place. Gregory remembered that I could draw funny little horses and animals, and told me that "this is a brand new business. It's *great*. You'll like it!"

So I agreed to try it. The luckiest experience of my life was probably Gregory

A Tribute to Animation's Man of the Century



Opposite page: Grim Natwick, late in his life. This page: a Natwick animation drawing from one of the first Betty Boop cartoons. Note the dog ears. From the collection of Mike and Jeanne Glad.

Character copyright © Fleischer Studios/King Features.

LaCava nagging at me to try animation. He just couldn't get artists! He'd be an interesting person to write about, even though he wasn't in animation all that long. His mind was just filled with gag avenues.

How was it working in this brand new business?

There was no competition between the early animators, because we all had the same problems. These fellows had many of them, and we figured them all out: how to make the figures move, how to get them in and then get them out again. It took about three years to really feel comfortable with the darned thing. Most of the guys never had more than a year or two of art school, and they used to turn the characters around by walking them off the screen.

I did a *Silk Hat Harry* once in a dance hall, with lots of drinking and music and pretty girls that I could draw. Harry was dancing with a chorus girl about twice as tall as he was. I'd learned how to do the circular waltz, so I danced them around in a circle. LaCava called everyone over to my table and said, "Look what Natwick's done." Some of the animators tried it and found that it wasn't too difficult. They started doing some experimenting after that, but before they would have never dared try it. Some of them were excellent animators, such as George Stallings, Bill Nolan, and John Foster.

When I was in art school, after I'd finished drawing a live model from the front, I used to go around and draw the back, because I thought it was an interesting exercise. So I knew what was back there. [Laughs]

Do you remember any other scenes you worked on at Hearst?

Yes, I did a *Happy Hooligan*, and they gave me a scene where Happy had decided that he was going to become a gentleman. He casts a fishing line through a transom, and gets a "bite" — which is a nice coat. Then he gets a hat, and a pair of pants, and a pair of patent leather shoes. He gets dressed up in this stuff and goes to the barber for a shave. The barber is foaming his face, and there's a little dog running from one side of the chair to the other and looking up at Hooligan. Happy gets nervous and asks the barber, "What's with that crazy little dog down there?" The barber says, "Sometimes I miss!"

Were you at Hearst when LaCava left for Hollywood?

Yes, I was, and he was very gracious to me about that. He called me into his office and said, "Grim, I'm not going to be around here much longer, and when I'm gone, they're going to offer you my job, because they like your work. But don't take one

nickel less than a hundred dollars a week, because that's what I'm getting!"

LaCava was the highest-paid person in the business at the time, but he went into the manager's office and demanded to be raised to six hundred dollars a week, which was more than double what Harold Lloyd was making! The manager called Hearst and told him what Gregory wanted, and Hearst's reply was "Fire the son of a bitch!" If LaCava had just quit on Hearst, he would have ruined him.

How did you get your job at the Fleischer Studio?

I'd been working out at Bill Nolan's studio in Long Branch, New Jersey, just a brief bus ride from New York. It was a very small operation; just two or three animators, an assistant, and I think his father was the cameraman. [Laughs] Anyway, Bill had to close his studio, and went over to Lantz. I was still thinking I would get into magazine illustration, and actually did do some covers for some of the smaller boys' magazines.

By this time, you had been in animation for some time. Did you still regard it as just a passing job?

Well, animators were making a hundred dollars a week, and Norman Rockwell was making a thousand! [Laughs] In any case, my assistant at Nolan's called me up and said, "Hey Grim, do you want a job? Max Fleischer is hiring animators." I went down and had a pleasant conversation with Max, and that was the beginning.

At the time you arrived at Flesicher's, Bimbo was their big star. I've seen model sheets where Betty Boop looks like a dog.

Bimbo was the only character that Fleischer had really developed, so I naturally assumed they wanted a girl dog for the girlfriend. So I worked up some drawings, and thought, "This is crazy; they *can't* want this," and threw those drawings away.

Apparently my two assistants, Al Eugster and Shamus Culhane, who were just two kids learning the business at the time, picked them up and finished them. I was shocked several months ago to see those first drawings again. Apparently they were saved when they should have been discarded.

Natwick provided the illustrations for Will Rogers's book Ether and Me *(1927). The lady in this drawing bears at least a passing resemblance to a more famous dancing girl that Natwick would create three years later.*

Betty's looks are unlike any other character's. How did you come up with her design?

She is made up of a lot of little tricks. She has no chin; her cheeks come right together and the lips are in the middle. The spit curls are supposed to be fascinating, and the garter suggests sex. She's a little clown, really. She could sing "Boop-Oop-a-Doop," and even little children could understand her.

It wasn't accidental; it was eight years of art school. One of the in-betweeners thought I had forgotten to draw her chin, so he put one into a drawing and it changed her whole personality!

Can we talk a little about your work on Snow White*? How much did you have to do with designing that character?*

Walt had Albert Hurter, the Swiss artist, who sort of oversaw the whole thing. I always tried to remember that Snow White was a princess, even though she never appeared that way in the story. I submitted drawings of her wearing a three-pointed crown and a cute little dress, but they were never used. Everything had to be turned over to Hurter, and he pretty much did a composite of all of them.

I worked with Marc Davis on *Snow White*. Marc was a very skilled artist, and I was lucky to get him. Jack Hannah later became an assistant of mine, and he's very good, too. But Marc could draw a good Snow White, and I think that Walt considered him one of the best, even then.

You worked on both the first and second full-length animated feature films, Snow White *and* Gulliver's Travels. *Do you have a favorite between the two?*

They were equally interesting. My position at Disney was just as another animator. At Fleischer's I had my own group of good friends and trainees under me, so I was at least superficially in charge. They were a very talented group, and together we worked on the Prince and the Princess, who was very much like Snow White.

Your career has been pivotal in making animation a legitimate art form. What would you call your proudest achievement?

Oh, I would have to say Betty. Years ago I was in Russia, helping to make an American film, and I was introduced to the [Russian] producer as the man who created Betty Boop. His face lit up and he said, "*Aaaaaaahh, Betsy Boop!*" So they know her over there. I was the guest of the French government some time ago, and everyone over there was wearing Betty sweatshirts. I get a lot of mail from England.

My life has been like playing cards with a marked deck, only I didn't know they were marked until I turned them over. It has been a very interesting life, because Betty's gone all over the world, and she's taken me with her. ■

[Interview Copyright © 1990 John Province.]

Grim Natwick Remembered: The Man From Wisconsin Heights

By Shamus Culhane

On Sunday, October 7, 1990, Grim Natwick, creator of Betty Boop, died in his sleep. Several weeks before, he had been hospitalized with a heart attack which had probably been caused by the excitement of celebrating his 100th birthday on August 18th.

With him died a piece of American history, because Grim lived his childhood in Wisconsin Rapids, a small town which still held fading vestiges of frontier life. When he was born in 1890, Sitting Bull and his minions had scarcely been pacified. Grim used to tell us tales of an annual pow-wow that was held on ground that was still sacred to the Indians, just on the outskirts of town.

When he spoke of braves bedecked in buckskin, beads, and feathers, Grim would often get up and demonstrate a typical Indian dance step, a complex-looking combination of shuffles and short hops. He would remind us that many of the older Indians who attended these meetings might very well have been part of the horde that massacred General Custer and his troops in 1876.

Grim's father owned the town's furniture store. It was heated by a huge pot-bellied stove. Every winter, the store was a gathering place for the menfolk of Wisconsin Rapids. They assembled to keep warm, chew tobacco, and whittle, while the storytellers made the old days come to life. Each detail was savored, and the hair-raising parts of the narrative were always deliberately underplayed. Grim, like Davy Crockett, adopted that style of delivery, and became a renowned after-dinner speaker. His punchlines were delivered in almost inaudible tones, with an expressionless face. The direct antithesis of our modern-day frenetic standup comics on television.

Grim was one of the few east coast animators to have studied abroad. (Al Giess and Izzy Klein were the others.) There he developed a sense of design that he incorporated into his animation, as can be seen in some of his later drawings of Betty Boop. Another outstanding example of his unique talent is the luxurious swirl of Snow White's skirt as she hurries down the stairs in the dwarfs' house.

It was an awesome sight to see Grim draw. In his prime, he was built like a fullback; he was easily the strongest man I have ever known. Crouched in his chair as if ready to spring, a frail-looking pencil held in a massive fist, one eye-tooth showing in a ferocious snarl, Natwick might be drawings Snow White with her hand delicately poised to balance a bird on her finger.

Al Eugster, Bernie Wolf, and I were like a pack of frolicking puppies following in the wake of a huge St. Bernard. Grim taught us, and a half-dozen other kids, the rudiments of animation at the Fleischer studio in 1930. When he moved on to the Iwerks studio, we followed him, and did the same to Disney's. Al and I joined him again at Fleischer's in Miami. Then Grim followed me to the Lantz studio; I directed films there, but Grim had little interest in direction. He preferred to animate, and proceeded to create some of the best Woody Woodpecker scenes that were ever drawn.

We finally parted when he joined UPA in Hollywood. Later, they sent him to work in their New York branch, animating TV spots. When the studio vanished during the Eisenhower depression of 1958, Grim faded into obscurity as a freelance TV spot animator. Finally, in 1967, he decided to retire in Hollywood to see, as he wryly put it, if he "could get the Mickey Mouse out of my paintbrush."

But Dick Williams dragged Grim back into the limelight when he had him go to London to work in his studio as a consultant. There, in his mid-eighties, he animated an exquisite little scene of a wart-ridden witch for Dick's feature picture. Suddenly, the entire animation community became aware that there, in their midst, was a monolithic and historical figure whose roots and tendrils were grounded in the very beginnings of animation.

He became a beloved, almost revered figure, gracing many an occasion with his presence, and convulsing his audience with his homespun wit. As Grim neared his one-hundredth birthday, it seemed as if every person in the field strained to see if he would make it. When he did, there was a lavish party which over four hundred people attended. It was a display of affection unparalleled in animation history.

Nature was kind to Grim Natwick. He never suffered the slightest trace of senility, and he died without pain. Those of us who were his friends can consider ourselves fortunate. Grim enriched our lives beyond measure. ■

Natwick at Disney: a Grim Natwick animation drawing of Mickey Mouse from Alpine Climbers *(1936). Courtesy Pam Martin.*

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The Life of Grim Natwick: From Happy Hooligan to Roger Rabbit

By Jay Rath

Myron H. "Grim" Natwick, creator of Betty Boop and countless other animated characters during a career spanning the history of animation, died Sunday, October 7th, 1990 of pneumonia in California, at the Santa Monica Medical Center.

During his lifetime Natwick worked with and for Max and Dave Fleischer, John Terry, Ub Iwerks, Walt Disney, Chuck Jones, Walter Lantz, Shamus Culhane, Richard Williams, and many others.

One of the first animators to be classically trained in the arts, he found his first professional success in New York, where his background quickly won him notice.

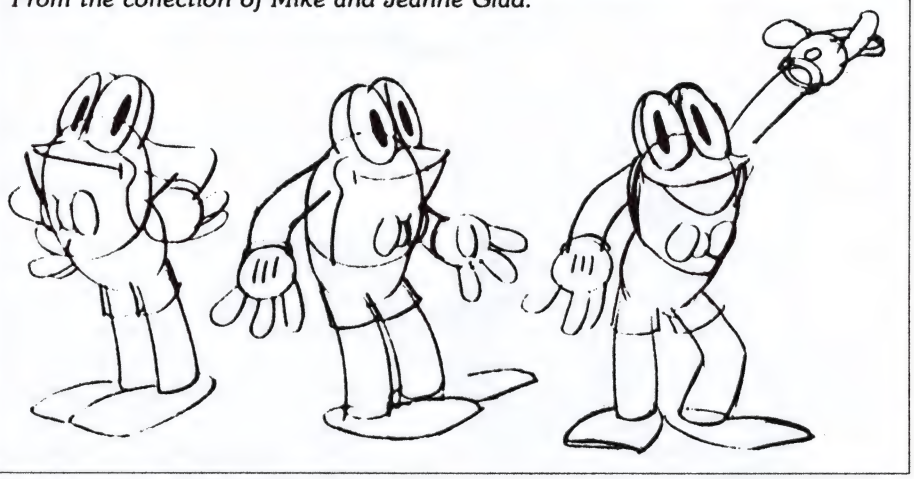
"I was what they call a natural animator," Natwick remembered, "and I don't know why. I have always attributed it to the fact that I was interested in athletics."

Natwick was born a century ago, on August 16th, 1890, to James W. and Henrietta Natwick, in Centralia, Wisconsin, later incorporated into the west side of Wisconsin Rapids. He grew up surrounded by small-town characters, lumberjacks, and Indians, all of whom provided material for stories with which Natwick would later entertain his peers.

He attended elementary school and high school in Wisconsin Rapids, and after encouragement from a teacher who told him that there was nothing left to learn there, he travelled to Chicago to attend the Art Institute. He had already seen his first animated film, a slapstick cartoon showing a man being flattened by a steamroller. "I laughed myself sick at that," Natwick told *Comics Scene* magazine the year before his death. "I don't know where it was made or where it came from, but it always stuck in my mind."

Natwick's move from the Chicago Art Institute to the Hearst International Film Service in New York is somewhat vague. He gave various accounts, some contradictory. [See John Province's interview with Natwick in this issue for more information.— Ed.] He was drafted to fight in World War I, but the Armistice was signed before he was to be shipped overseas. To earn money, he illustrated sheet-music covers, including W.C. Handy's first six published songs, for a Chicago publisher. Then, at the urging of fellow Art Institute alumnus Gregory LaCava, he went to work at Hearst International.

Poses from a model sheet of Ub Iwerks's Flip the Frog, probably by Natwick. From the collection of Mike and Jeanne Glad.



"LaCava said he'd pay me forty bucks a week," Natwick told the *Chicago Reader* in 1989. "I said, 'All right, I'll try it for one month.' I figured people would still be publishing songs if I didn't like it.'"

That precise sequence of events is improbable, however: Hearst International closed in July of 1918, while the Armistice wasn't signed until November 11th of that year.

Still, there is no doubt that Natwick's talent shone at Hearst's, and later at John Terry's Greenwich Village studio, which continued to produce many of the Hearst properties. "I was doing things that other animators had not dared to do," Natwick said. "I deliberately would sometimes draw a side view or a back view, just to know it was there."

Walter Lantz, who worked with Natwick at Hearst's, told Joe Adamson for *The Walter Lantz Story* that Natwick "learned animation faster than anyone I knew, because he was such a wonderful draughtsman." Natwick, for his part, called himself "a rough animation guy."

Natwick continued his studies at the New York National Academy of Design and, in 1925, at the Vienna National Academy in Austria. Upon his return to New York, Natwick joined the Fleischer studio. In 1930 he created Betty Boop, as he told the *Chicago Tribune* in 1989, after seeing a sheet-music cover illustrated with the likeness of Helen Kane, the original "Boop-Oop-A-Doop" girl. Betty's figure, he said, came from Mae West. Oddly enough, Natwick also credited the work of Charles Dana Gibson, well-known to fans of magazine cartoons for his elegant line drawings of hauntingly beautiful women. Betty Boop's eyelashes and legs, Natwick said, were those of a Gibson Girl.

"I knew for her to do dancing and other things she had to do, her legs were important," he said.

Natwick joined Ub Iwerks' Celebrity Productions, where his character designs became dominant, according to Leonard Maltin. In 1933 he redesigned Iwerks' Willie Whopper to give the character more personality. Iwerks valued Natwick so much that he offered him a partnership, but he declined and moved to Disney.

Towards the end of his life, Natwick said that he did nothing during his first year at Disney other than collect his paycheck. Earlier, however, he recalled working on Silly Symphonies, working most of the time on female characters, probably in preparation for *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*.

He was the chief animator for both Snow White and the Prince for that film, working with five assistants. Natwick admitted in Leonard Maltin's *Of Mice and Magic* that he used rotoscoping for poses in *Snow White* — but that the tracings were valuable only as key drawings, with as many as one hundred in-betweens separating them.

Shamus Culhane recalls that Natwick made informal attempts to organize a union while at the Iwerks studio. He left Disney before the 1941 strike and returned to the Fleischer studio, where he worked on its

two feature-length films. *Gulliver's Travels* and *Mr. Bug Goes to Town*. Natwick joined Walter Lantz's studio in 1944, where he animated Woody Woodpecker. In the 1950s, he animated Mr. Magoo and other characters at UPA's New York studio. He also worked for Shamus Culhane, helping to create some of the first animated television commercials.

Grim Natwick officially retired in 1968, but five years later Richard Williams lured him to London to help train animators for his as-yet unfinished film *The Thief and the Cobbler*. Natwick also animated for Williams on the latter's 1977 *Raggedy Ann and Andy* feature. He also advised the animators who worked to recreate Betty Boop for Williams' animation in *Who Framed Roger Rabbit*.

Natwick enjoyed his rediscovery as Betty Boop's creator, and travelled widely to promote sales of limited-edition cels of the character. Sometimes he used the appearances as forums to denigrate merchandising of the character most closely linked with his name. "I get things sent to me all the time — Betty Boop posters, cardboard cutouts, placemats," he said. "And in about two-thirds of them, she's too tall. If she gets too tall you lose the cuteness."

He characterized television cartoons as "spastic animation."

Grim Natwick had homes in West Los Angeles and Chillicothe, Missouri the year before his death. He was returned to his native Wisconsin Rapids for burial at Forest Hill Cemetery on October 11th, 1990. He is survived by his daughter, Nancy Matehall, a brother, Vernon, a sister, Gladys, and two grandsons. He was preceded in death by his parents, five brothers, and one sister. ■

Cheers From a Grim Century

By Hugh Kenner

The anonymous art was architecture once (who designed the Colosseum?). In our time it's been film animation. That has lately engaged a corps of volunteer historians, thanks to whom it's easy now to say who invented Betty Boop, who swept Snow White down that stairway. One man: Grim Natwick. The master of them all, other cel pioneers affirm; without question, the unparalleled virtuoso at imparting life and movement to cartoon girls.

Natwick was present nearly at the creation of the animator's art, to which he was likely the first to bring art-school training (Chicago Art Institute; National Academy of Design; three years of life classes at the Vienna National Academy, where his heroes became Egon Schiele and Gustav Klimt). So, back in, oh, 1916, when animators were settling for rubber-hose limbs, Grim Natwick to their astonishment was articulating wrists, elbows, ankles, at the then-normal rate of a hundred drawings per morning. Those were finished frame-by- frame drawings, camera-ready. Delegation of mere drudgery to cleaner-uppers, in-betweeners, was a dodge that hadn't been thought of.

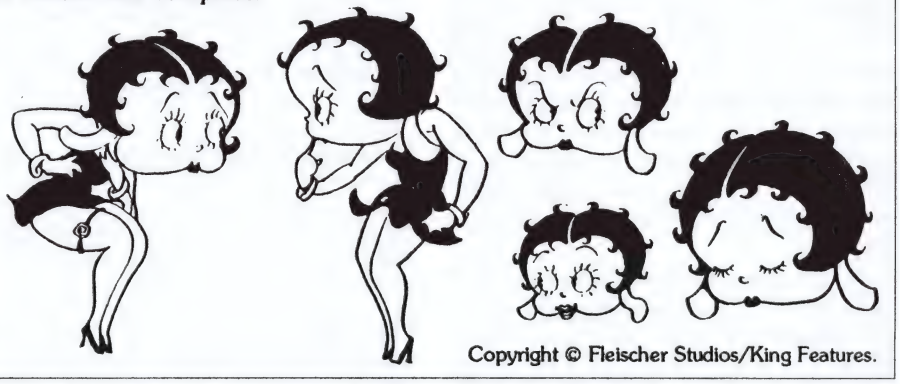
By 1930 he was with Max and Dave Fleischer, and sound had arrived, and the in thing was to animate current hit tunes; but *fast*, before they'd faded. One morning a record alighted on Grim Natwick's desk: "the 'Boop-Oop-a-Doop' song sung by Helen Kane."

You've guessed the next step, but not quite. Helen Kane wore spit curls, "So I started with that and designed a little character who was supposed to work with Bimbo the dog. She started out as a little dog with long ears, but the rest of her was extremely feminine, and she did a rather swinging dance in the first picture (*Dizzy Dishes*, 1930), which no dog could have done." Soon "the long ears developed into earrings, and she was nothing but a cute little girl."

Yes, that was Betty Boop, now ageless at sixty. At first, hardly anyone else in the studio could animate her. Shamus Culhane, later master of all Seven Dwarfs, would recall struggling to give her "an arm, and not just a kind of stick with a hand on it." But Grim's Betty's vamping seemed artless. His art teachers had imparted forearm anatomy such as any vamp flaunts: ulna, radius, trim carpus. Round hips swung too. Cartoons weren't aimed at kids. That came only with Saturday a.m. TV.

Mickey Mouse, Horace Horsecollar, Clarabelle Cow, Donald Duck; conceived as farmyard animals, most cartoon characters of the 1930s stayed that way. For, apt to seem funnier than people, they were also easier for untrained hands to animate plausibly. Betty's metamorphosis, dog to cutie, was surprising enough to catch Walt Disney's eye, and by 1937 Grim Natwick found himself in charge of the title character in *Snow White*. His 84 scenes comprise a tenth of the final footage. "The dwarfs were much easier," he once recalled. Tie nose, eyes, whiskers together, and "if it wasn't perfect in between, you wouldn't notice." But Snow White's eyes were in an open space; when she turned her head "eyes and mouth had to follow through *perfectly*, otherwise you'd get a jitter." His mind would affix eyes and mouth not to flat paper but to the three-dimensional head art study had made second nature.

Poses from a Betty Boop model sheet, before the transformation from canine to human was complete.



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And his triumph was her run — circling, diminishing — down that staircase. The way he'd been used to twenty years before, he specified every frame: "The best animation I ever did."

How many creators have seen their 101st year? Sophocles did live to be ninety, and Aeschylus might have made it past 69 had not an eagle dropped a tortoise on his bald head. That tortoise was a gag fit for Grim Natwick to relish, last August 16th, on his hundredth birthday. ■

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ACME ACRES: An Analytical Atlas

A Critical Guide to Tiny Toon Adventures

By Dave Mackey

There was a country song a few years back in which it was stated that "Some days are diamonds, and some days are stones." As it is in life, so it is in Tiny Toon Adventures. *The first 65 episodes of the show have used a variety of directors, writers (despite the fact that Plucky sings "the scripts were rejected" in the show's opening, there are scripts here), story editors, animation subcontractors, and storytelling formats, accounting for wide swings in quality owing to the talents of the participants involved on certain days. But even a low-echelon* TTA *is watchable; you just won't laugh as loud and as long at it.*

So, in the spirit of scholarship and consumer information, what follows is an episode guide to Tiny Toon Adventures. *This is alphabetically arranged by episode title so you can quickly find your favorite story and see if my opinion of it matches yours. Title is followed by episode format, (A) for Adventure, a half-hour story, and (S) for short, which runs for one program segment. (Some shorts are double-length.)*

*The date listed is of original broadcast on the syndicated, five-days-a-week "Tiny Toon Adventures." This does not consider the weekend broadcasts seen on some stations. Followed by the star rating, shamelessly stolen from Joe Adamson, and meaning roughly the same thing — ***** is "A great short film....," and * is "Awwwww....." Star ratings encompass these key factors: humor, production values, and faithfulness to established Warner Bros. mythos. (The characters are technically not related to the original Looney Tunes gang but there is enough of a heritage that you do have to consider the personalities of some of the original characters and wonder if, for example, Hamton's motivation would be similar to Porky Pig's in a situation.)*

This guide covers the first 65 episodes of the show, except for one which was unavailable for viewing at presstime.

Dave Mackey

"Acme Acres Summer Olympics" (S) 2/12/91 * / D: Rich Arons / W: Earl Kress, Jim Reardon, Tom Minton, Tom Ruegger / Track and field events with sportscasters Foghorn Leghorn and Speedy Gonzales. A procession of extremely dumb (stupid, even) spot gags.

"The Acme Bowl" (A) 11/16/90 *** / D: Ken Boyer / W: Steve Langford, Debra Blanchard, Tom Ruegger, Paul Dini / Acme Looniversity vs. undefeated (for 200 years!) Perfecto Prep. with Buster at QB. Perfecto woos Plucky over to their camp because he has the last remaining Acme Loo playbook. The sort of gridiron potboiler Warner's would have done in live action 55 years ago.

"America's Least Wanted" (S) 2/22/91 *** / D: Rich Arons / W: Jim Reardon / Plucky watches *America's Top 10 Criminals*, hosted by Flakey Fakem (voice of Casey Kasem) and is convinced that milquetoast Hamton is Knuckles Cutlet, one of the maniacal criminals on the show. Idea of criminal pig lookalike lifted from Frank Tashlin's *Porky's Double Trouble*.

"And All That Rot" (double-length S) 2/18/91 *** / D: Rich Arons / W: Eddie Fitzgerald / The great detective Brainy Domes (Buster) suspects Montiarity of stealing the Queen's jewels. Neat twist ending makes this one worth watching more than once.

"Animaniacs!" (A) 11/12/90 **** / D: Art Vitello / W: Paul Dini, Tom Minton / Buster describes how an animated cartoon is made, tutors Plucky in flashback management, and hosts the main event: animated films made by the Tiny Toons themselves for their Animation 101 course. Judges include Bugs, Porky, and Daffy. Some of the animated films are quite inventive, including "Dizzy Eat World" and "A Montana Max Christmas." Gogo Dodo's entry is mainly clips from Warner's Joe McDoakes comedy *So You Want To Learn To Dance*, starring George O'Hanlon. Shirley's runs for 17:34 (that's 17 hours, 34 minutes), so Plucky's five-second entry wins by the unanimous decision of the judges — "It's short!" Great fun for cartoon fans.

"The Anvil Chorus" (S) 9/26/90 **** / D: Art Leonardi / W: Jim Reardon, Paul Dini, Don Dougherty, Tom Ruegger / Plucky gets pelted by anvils during a performance of the famous musical piece "Anvil Chorus." Halfway in, a Peggy Charren type comments on the acts of violence committed thus far, and herself gets konked by an anvil. Art Leonardi, an old-time Warner Bros. animator, is justifiably proud of this reel, recounting with more than a little glee that Plucky gets hit with forty anvils and six rounds of cannon fire.

"Aroma Amore" (S) 10/2/90 *** / D: Art Vitello / W: Sherri Stoner / LePew redux: Furrball gets a white stripe painted down his back and is therefore pursued by Fifi LeFume. Very good take on the Pepe series; thematically grouped with the other two Furrball stories that Vitello directed for the October 2nd broadcast.

"Awful Orphan" (S) 9/27/90 ** / D: Art Vitello / W: Nick Hollander / Elmyra adopts Li'l Sneezer. The Elmyra stories don't operate in a broad range of plot situations, since Elmyra only wants to love little pets.

"A Bacon Strip" (S) 10/3/90 ** / D: Ken Boyer / W: Wayne Kaatz / Hamton has to make it home without his clothes. Features June Foray as Granny. If you have a slow-motion VCR you can analyze Hamton's jump on the diving board; the CENSORED sign doesn't quite keep up with that which is being censored.

"Bag That Bunny" (S) 9/26/90 ** / D: Art Leonardi / W: Dale Hale / Elmyra recruits Calamity Coyote to trap Buster.

"Bat's All Folks" (double-length S) 11/15/90 *** / D: Art Vitello / W: teleplay by Paul Dini, Buzz Dixon; story by Bruce Timm, Art Vitello / Parody of Batman and his merchandising through the ages with Plucky in the starring role.

"Bear Necessities" (S) 12/12/90 ** / D: Ken Boyer / W: Gordon Bressack, Jim Reardon / Elmyra vs. the Three Bears; Stan Freberg as Junyer. Her antics drive the highly domesticated bears back into the zoo.

"Best O' Plucky Duck Day" (A) 11/21/90 *** / D: Rich Arons / W: Beth Bornstein, Paul Dini, Eddie Fitzgerald, Tom Minton, Tom Ruegger / Buster introduces these "duck tales" (oops). "One Minute Till Three": the longest minute of Plucky's day is the last minute of Granny's computer animation class. "Sticky Feathers Duck": Plucky tries to steal a candy bar from a convenience store. "Duck In The Dark": after watching a Freddy Krueger type movie, Plucky is somewhat reluctant to turn off the lights before going to bed. Despite its title, these three shorts (technically formatted as an adventure) have never been seen before.

"Bird Dog Afternoon" (S) 9/27/90 ** / D: Art Vitello / W: Pat Allee, Ben Hurst, Tom Ruegger / Perpetually-starved Furrball is after a trio of baby birds watched over by a basset hound.

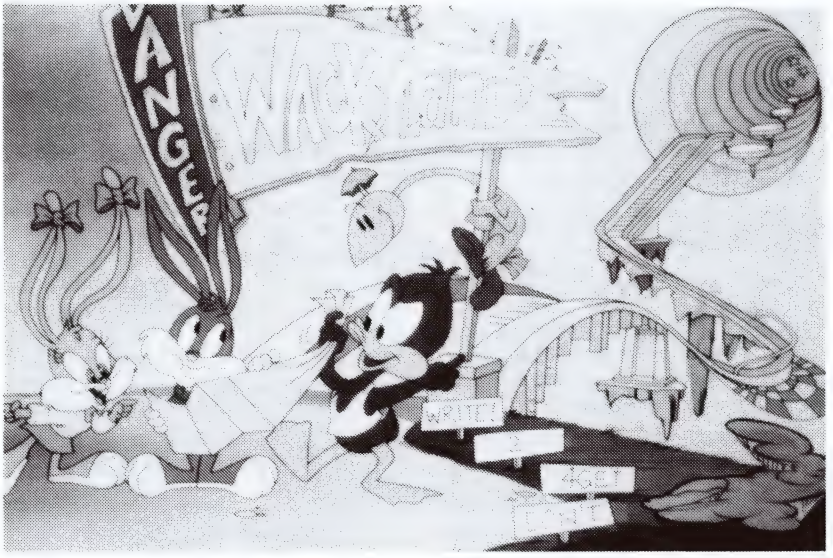
"Bleacher Bummer" (S) 10/30/90 ** / D: Kent Butterworth / W: Chuck Menville / Acme Looniversity plays Perfecto Prep in baseball, but the real action is off the field. Features appearances by Porky Pig and Sylvester.

"Boo-Ha-Ha" (S) 2/4/91 *** / D: Kent Butterworth / W: Tom Minton, Wayne Kaatz, Tom Ruegger / Plucky and Hamton spend the night in a haunted hotel. For cartoon trivia buffs, Plucky signs the guest register, in which the following names already appear: C. Jones, Tex, Steven Spielberg, Jean MacCurdy, David Marshall, I. Freleng, Kent Butterworth, Thomas Ruegger, and Martin Strudler (Marshall is an animation supervisor; Strudler is a layout artist for the series — all the other names are self-explanatory). And there's a scene inspired by the Black God sequence from *Fantasia*.

"Born To Be Riled" (S) 9/20/90 *** / D: Art Leonardi / W: Sherri Stoner / Babs makes fun of her friends Fifi and Shirley, so they get back at her.

"Buffed Bunny" (S) 9/20/90 *** / D: Art Leonardi / W: Gordon Bressack, Charles M. Howell IV / To impress Babs, Buster tries to pump himself up. Bugs Bunny makes a cameo appearance in his den, which includes framed portraits of Friz Freleng, Bob McKimson, Chuck Jones, Bob Clampett, Frank Tashlin and Tex Avery. This and the other two 9/20/90 episodes were wrapped with a parody of *The Mickey Mouse Club* called "Buster Bunny Bunch," in some cases matching the original *MMC* opening animation step for step.

"Bunnochio" (double-length S) 12/12/90 *** / D: Ken Boyer / W: Tom Ruegger, Tom Minton / Toymaker Gepetto (voice of Orson Bean) presents Buster Bunny to a cadre of toy company executives as an interactive, belligerent toy. As Bugs did in *Case Of the Missing Hare*, Buster plays "Red Light Green Light" with the toy company's sales force.



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Final gag is a play on the Energizer commercials with that bunny who keeps going and going and going.... but not as funny as a surprise appearance by the bunny in an otherwise unrelated short would have been.

"Bunny Daze" (S) 11/1/90 ** / D: Art Leonardi / W: Barry Caldwell / Babs has fun at home alone by fantasizing. At least *someone*'s having fun.

"Buster And The Wolverine" (A) 10/19/90 ** / D: Art Leonardi / W: Tom Ruegger, Paul Dini / Musical retelling of "Peter and The Wolf" modified to suit the *TTA* characters. Includes a gag cameo by the Mynah Bird, complete with "Fingal's Cave" music.

"Buster At The Bat" (S) 2/12/91 *** / D: Rich Arons / W: Jim Reardon / Yet another parody of Thayer's classic poem — but Plucky needs to have his contract renegotiated before he steps up to bat. A telling parody of big money baseball in the 90's. This is one of a number of *TTA* episodes in which all the characters talk out of the side of their mouths; in most cases this animation styling is courtesy of Kennedy Animation.

"Buster's Guide To Dating" (S) 11/19/90 *** / D: Gerard Baldwin / W: Tom Ruegger, Sherri Stoner, Paul Dini / Buster and Babs illustrate some dating dos and don'ts. I guess since Buster and Babs are "no relation," this means that they can date.

"Buster's Guide To Goofing Off" (S) 2/15/91 *** / D: Ken Boyer / W: Tom Minton / Buster puts off his school science fair project (one of those volcanos everyone seems to make) until the very last minute, substituting dynamite for the baking soda solution.

"Buster's Guide To Part Time Jobs" (S) 11/13/90 *** / D: Art Leonardi / W: Gordon Bressack, Charles M. Howell IV / Buster tells you how to get a job, how to score points with your boss, etc. by demonstrating his and Babs' experience at Weenie Burger.

"Buster's New Bike" (S) 2/12/91 ** / D: Rich Arons / W: Grant Moran, Tom Minton, Tom Ruegger / Buster has to put his old bike out to pasture, so he tries to buy one from Bicycle Bob (who sounds a lot like Mr. Haney from *Green Acres*, not surprising since Pat Buttram did the voice). Buster gets ripped off so he coaxes Bob to confess on live television. A few bad puns like "stop on a dime" and "belted tires."

"Butt Out" (S) 10/4/90 ** / D: Rich Arons / W: Sherri Stoner, Tom Ruegger / Roderick and Ruebella disturb Babs with their smoking.

"Buttering Up The Buttfields" (S) 2/11/91 *** / D: Art Leonardi / W: Paul Dini, Tom Minton, Wayne Kaatz / Plucky, working as a waiter at the Acme Acres Country Club, has to serve the club's most demanding customers: The Buttfields (who have extremely large rear ends, recalling those old *Saturday Night Live* sketches). Naturally, they order duck a l'orange. So Plucky tries to convince them that they'd really rather have rabbit — namely, Buster. Pete Puma (Stan Freberg) is back for more lumps.

"C Flat Or B Sharp?" (S) 12/7/90 **** / D: Gerard Baldwin / W: Buzz Dixon / Liszt's Second Hungarian Rhapsody, longtime staple of WB cartoons, is the musical score for this short in the Friz Freleng tradition. Hamton, Buster and Plucky have to figure out how to get a piano from the Looniversity bell tower to the recital hall downstairs. Though the short evokes memories of Laurel and Hardy's *The Music Box*, the title card borrows from Chuck Jones' *High Note*.

"Citizen Max" (A) 10/15/90 **** / D: Art

Vitello / W: Gordon Bressack, Charles M. Howell IV, Paul Dini, Tom Ruegger / Kane Lite: Parody of you-know-what with Monty in the title role and lots of homages to Welles, yet essentially retelling the story of the original film. Instead of "Rosebud," Hamton tries to decipher the meaning of Monty's last word — "Acme" — after his expulsion from Acme Loo. Premiered on the "Prime Toons" weekend edition on September 28, 1990.

"Class Cut Up" (S) 11/7/90 *** / D: Art Leonardi / W: Earl Kress, Tom Ruegger / Stop me if you've heard this one before: Hamton tries to convince Foghorn Leghorn, Nurse Granny, and Bugs Bunny that the dead frog he's dissecting in science class can actually sing and dance. Personally, I thought that frog was still sitting in the cornerstone of the Tregoweth Brown Building waiting around for 2055 A.D.

"Cross Country Kitty" (S) 10/2/90 ** / D: Art Vitello / W: Eddie Fitzgerald / Furrball, in another attempt to find a permanent home, takes up residence with Mary Melody, who takes him on vacation to keep his mind off Sweetie.

"Dapper Diz" (double-length S) 12/4/90 *** / D: Rich Arons / W: Paul Dini / Mr. Popular (Buster) transforms Dizzy Devil from a slob into a cultured gentleman.

"Day For Knight" (S) 2/18/91 *** / D: Rich Arons / W: Earl Kress, Tom Minton, Jim Reardon / Court jester Babs is sentenced to the dragon's lair; Buster is sent to her rescue. The opening sets us up for a remake of *Knighty-Knight, Bugs*, with Babs entertaining the King, but the story veers off on its own direction and offers us new stuff. The neurotic dragon that threatens Babs is a parody of Woody Allen, complete with clarinet.

"Debutante Devil" (S) 10/11/90 ** / D: Art Vitello / W: Sherri Stoner / Tutored by the Tasmanian Devil, Dizzy Devil is out to eat Babs.

"Devil Doggie" (S) 9/18/90 ** / D: Art Vitello / W: Paul Dini / Elmyra wants to keep Dizzy Devil as her pet puppy.

"A Ditch In Time" (A) 11/9/90 *** / D: Art Vitello / W: Wayne Kaatz, Art Vitello, Bruce Timm, Douglas McCarthy / Inspired by H.G. Wells, Plucky builds a time machine, sending a Taz-osaurus back to the present day; meanwhile, Buster and Babs meet their ancestors.

"Drawn And Buttered" (S) 2/22/91 *** / D: Rich Arons / W: Jim Reardon, Grant Moran / Hamton buys a lobster from Cap'n Teneal's Seafood Emporium, and the lobster (who sings "We're Shoving Right Off For Home Again") thwarts all attempts to boil him. After this lobster plays a few pranks on Hamton, he makes the highly unoriginal declaration that "I do this stuff to him through the whole cartoon." The lobster pulls the old "spare me, I've got a family" bit, showing a wallet full of pictures. Hamton shows identical pictures in his billfold and declares that they came with the wallet! Bonus throwaway prologue: the opening titles to *The Hamton Show*, co-starring Elmyra Tyler Moore, Rose Shirley, and Plucky Ducksterdam! Bet he trips over the ottoman!

"Dream Date Game" (S) 11/19/90 *** / D: Rich Arons / W: Tom Ruegger, Paul Dini / Elmyra has to pick a date from among Hamton, Plucky and Monty in this spoof of *The Dating Game*. Sponsored by Weenie Burgers.

"Drooley Davey" (S) 11/8/90 ** / D: Kent Butterworth / W: Tom Minton, Paul Dini, Beth Bernstein / Elmyra babysits the title character.

pseudonym "Allen Smithee," which is traditionally used when a film is bungled beyond its director's control and he doesn't want his name on it. To my knowledge it has never been used in animation. The director was said to be displeased with the subcontracted animation.

"Duck Out Of Luck" (S) 10/11/90 ** / D: Eddie Fitzgerald / W: Eddie Fitzgerald, Wayne Kaatz / The viewers decide what Plucky should do in this cartoon. They make him Duck Daring and Duck Kong.

"Duck Trek" (S) 10/10/90 ** / D: Ken Boyer / W: Jim Reardon / The innnnnnteresting

"Duck Dodgers Jr." (S) 2/4/91 **** / D: Kent Butterworth / W: Mike Kazaleh, Maurice Noble, Wayne Kaatz / Designed by Maurice Noble / Plucky becomes Eager Young Space Cadet as Daffy once again assumes the role of DUCK DODGERS IN THE 24-1/2TH CENTURY!!!! Marvin Martian is back, too, with a Tiny Toon counterpart, Marcia Martian. Nothing's ever going to come close to the classic 1952 cartoon which inspired this, but I would rate it above Chuck Jones's 1980 sequel *Duck Dodgers And The Return Of The 24-1/2th Century*. Inviting Maurice back to do layout and key background design was a Noble move on the producers' part, though his 1991 view of the future is strikingly similar to that which he envisioned in the original *Duck Dodgers*. But it's still better than your average television cartoon and noteworthy enough to warrant crediting Maurice as designer on the title panel.

"Duck In The Muck" (S) 11/14/90 ** / D: "Allen Smithee" / W: Tom Minton / Plucky (The Toxic Revenger) investigates swamp pollution and finds it caused by Max's ice cream spoon factory. At the end, mutated, double-billed Plucky proposes a spinoff series: *Twin Beaks*. Reportedly, one of the *TTA* directors directed this cartoon (and one other) using the monster Gossamer appears in this unnnnninterestng sci-fi spoof.

"Easy Biter" (S) 9/25/90 *** / D: Art Leonardi / W: Pat Allee, Ben Hurst, Tom Ruegger / A mosquito is out to put the bite on Hamton right in the hams.

"Eating Between The Lines" (S) 11/20/90 *** / D: Gerard Baldwin / W: Eddie Fitzgerald, Jim Reardon / Acme Acres food chain: Bookworm eats books, Sweetie eats Bookworm. Meanwhile, for the first time since 1946, some of the books come to life! A rocket from *The Right Stuff* blasts off, and falling Bookworm is caught by *The Catcher In The Rye*. Celebrity joke: Sweetie is pummelled by a book entitled *The Mike Tyson Story*, thereafter commenting, "Now I know how Robin Givens feels!" Somewhat inspired by the classic WB short *Sniffles And The Bookworm*.

"Egged-On Eagle" (S) 2/19/91 ** / D: Ken Boyer / W: Sherri Stoner / The stork, somewhat more sober than in his past Looney Tunes appearances (*Goo Goo Goliath, Stork Naked, Apes Of Wrath*, etc.) but no more competent, delivers Sweetie Bird to an American Eagle, so the Eagle trains Sweetie to become the proud

symbol of our nation.

"Elmyra At The Mall" (S) 2/15/91 *** / D: Ken Boyer / W: Nicholas Hollander / Charlie Dog pulls out all the stops, including the old Sad Eyes routine, to find his pals a home. Meanwhile (real plot begins here), Elmyra's parents take her shopping, and when she looks for "aminals" at the pet store, she becomes locked in the mall overnight. Poor "aminals."

"Elmyra's Round The World!" (S) 2/8/91 *** / D: Art Leonardi / W: Paul Dini / Buster is knocked unconscious and imagines what Elmyra is like in different countries. An unusual cartoon, directed in the visual style of Leonardi's main title work for TV and movies.

"Elmyra's Spring Cleaning" (S) 11/6/90 **** / D: Eddie Fitzgerald, Kent Butterworth /, W: Eddie Fitzgerald / A little gem. Elmyra vacuums the house, most of the creatures in it, all the water in the fish bowl... and more. Neat dialogueless cartoon with a classical music score, and one of the few cartoons in which ex-*Mighty Mouse* directors Fitzgerald and Butterworth really sparkle, and Elmyra gets something more to do than love unsuspecting toons to death!

"Europe In 30 Minutes" (A) 10/26/90 **** / D: Art Leonardi / W: Stephen Hibbert / Buster, Babs, Hamton, and Plucky take a whirlwind tour of Europe, then crash-land at Buckingham Palace and become involved in a plot to kidnap Prince Charles (voice of Tim Curry) and Princess Di.

"Falling To Pizzas" (S) 11/13/90 ** / D: Art Leonardi / W: Sherri Stoner / Calamity Coyote wants the pizza that Little Beeper is delivering, so he devises some ingenious methodology to intercept it. Imagine a Road Runner/Coyote cartoon taking place in the city and you have the gist of this cartoon.

"Fang You Very Much" (S) 9/25/90 ** / D: Art Leonardi / W: Richard Mueller / Elmyra's new pet bat turns into Count Bloodcount the vampire (*Transylvania 6-5000).*

"Fields Of Honey" (A) 11/2/90 ***** / D: Ken Boyer / W: Sherri Stoner, Tom Ruegger / Warner delves into its prehistory for this outstanding adventure featuring its Harman and Ising stars, Bosko and Honey. Babs discovers she has no classic Warner Bros. counterpart like the other Tiny Toons until she finds Honey, so, urged on by a heavenly voice as in *Field of Dreams* (hence the title), she wages a one-wabbit campaign to resurrect Honey's fleeting fame. Warm and funny; unquestionably the best episode of the series, and a great showcase for Babs, herself a Honey of a character.

"Fur-Gone Conclusion" (S) 11/1/90 *** / D: Art Leonardi / W: Wayne Kaatz, Chris Otsuki / "Rescuers" Buster and Babs save helpless animals from being turned into furs by Madame Gotcha Grabmore (voiced by Joan Gerber).

"Gang Busters" (A) 10/12/90 **** / D: Ken Boyer / W: Wayne Kaatz, Jim Reardon / Buster and Plucky are mistakenly imprisoned for the misdeeds of Max and his gang. *Outstanding* animation, especially in the third and final act, and excellent direction by Ken Boyer.

"Go Fetch" (S) 11/8/90 *** / D: Kent Butterworth / W: Bob Carrau / Elmyra plays fetch with Barky Marky.

"Hare-Raising Night" (A) 10/1/90 *** / D: Art Vitello / W: Gordon Bressack, Charles M. Howell IV / Plucky Duck is in the clutches of mad scientist Dr. Gene Splicer (voice of Jeff "Butt Steak" Altman). Bugs Bunny cameo.

"Hare Today, Gone Tomorrow" (A) 10/9/90 *** / D: Ken Boyer, Eddie Fitzgerald / W: Wayne Kaatz, Tom Ruegger, Gordon Bressack, Charles M. Howell IV / When Elmyra decides to keep Buster as a pet, he discovers an entire menagerie of similarly imprisoned animals. Watch carefully for a gag inspired by Spielberg's logo of the bicycle silhouetted against the moon.

"Her Wacky Highness" (A) 9/21/90 **** / D: Ken Boyer / W: Sherri Stoner / After Professor Elmer Fudd sends her home for acting up in school, Babs runs away to Wackyland and is made queen. Coming relatively early in the series, this cartoon made it clear that Sherri Stoner would be the writer to handle Babs's best moments.

"Hero Hamton" (A) 11/23/90 *** / D: Gerard Baldwin / W: Gordon Bressack, Charles M. Howell IV / Hamton challenges Montana Max to a fight after school, receiving training help from Plucky, spiritual guidance from Shirley the Loon, and moral support from Porky Pig.

"Hold The Sugar" (S) 2/15/91 *** / D: Ken Boyer / W: Tom Minton / In an ant colony where everyone loves sweet treats, one ant prefers healthy snacks like oat bran and brown rice. This causes the other ants to ostracize him. Eventually, though, he saves them from being turned into chocolate-covered ants. Unique one-shot, refreshing but somewhat predictable.

"Hollywood Plucky" (A) 10/23/90 **** / D: Art Vitello / W: Sherri Stoner / Plucky tries to sell his script to the most powerful producer in Hollywood. Lots of current celebrity caricatures and in-jokes — watch for a star on the Walk of Fame bearing the name Art Vittello (sic). One of the most successful update jobs of a classic Warner Bros. storyline — two, actually, since it's a hybrid of *Hollywood Daffy* and *The Scarlet Pumpernickel.* Premiered on the weekend *Prime Toons* show on September 21st, 1990.

"Home Wrecker" (S) 9/25/90 *** / D: Art Leonardi / W: Pamela Hickey, Dennys McCoy / Monty wants to build a house where Buster's hole is, and lowers it on the bunny. So Buster spooks Monty, who thinks he's killed him.

"I Was A Teenage Bunny Sitter" (S) 2/6/91 *** / D: Rich Arons / W: Sherri Stoner / Babs's adventures in babysitting little Duncan. Witty and flamboyantly staged, but otherwise your basic babysitting story, straight out of the trunk, right down to its predictable ending where the kid is still awake and sitter is asleep.

"It's A Jungle Out There" (S) 10/17/90 * / D: Rich Arons / W: Pat Allee, Ben Hurst / Concord Condor gets into all sorts of trouble while flying, including a run-in with Arnold (one of the show's original characters, a Schwarzenegger-inspired bulldog voiced by Rob Paulsen). The *TTA* equivalent of a McKimson throwaway.

"Journey To The Center Of Acme Acres" (A) 9/24/90 *** / D: Art Leonardi / W: Wayne Kaatz / Monty steals the earth's golden core;.the gremlin from "Falling Hare" causes earthquakes.

"Jungle Bungle" (S) 2/14/91 ** / D: Ken Boyer / W: M.D. Sweeney / Buster and Babs investigate the global warming trends caused by the destruction of the rainforests. As clinical as it sounds.

"K-9 Kitty" (S) 10/2/90 ** / D: Art Vitello / W: Tom Minton / Furrball tries to pass himself off as a dog to gain adoption by a cat-hating couple who can't tell the difference.

"KACME-TV" (A) 2/26/91 **** / D: Kent Butterworth, Art Leonardi, Ken Boyer / W: Paul Dini, Sherri Stoner, Tom Ruegger / Various television spoofs, too many to list but the best include a commercial for Unlucky Worms (a word-for-word take on Lucky Charms), the game show *Gyp-Parody* in which Elmyra drives Buster into senility, *I Love Dizzy* (black-and-white tribute to Lucy's job on the candy assembly line), a promo for *Honey, I Shrunk The Clothes* (credits for this film whiz by about as fast as they do for *Box Office Bunny*), *The Blunder Years,* and *The Acme Home Cartoon Kit,* featuring caricatures of the entire *TTA* staff. This was the final show produced in the show's first season; more artists were credited on this episode than any other.

"Kitty Cat-Astrophy" (S) 10/17/90 ** / D: Rich Arons / W: Gordon Bressack, Charles M. Howell IV / Furrball's imagination runs wild in Hamton's house. The title card for this short is a direct swipe from the classic Looney Tune *Kitty Kornered*; unfortunately this cartoon isn't quite as inspired as Bob Clampett's original

"The Learning Principal" (S) 11/20/90 * / D: Gerard Baldwin / W: Paul Dini / Buster is sent to the principal's office. Pay no attention to that wabbit behind the curtain. (The principal is voiced by Noel Blanc, quite good in a voice characterization of his own and not one of his dad's.)

"Let's Do Lunch" (S) 2/19/91 *** / D: Art Leonardi / W: Nicholas Hollander / Weird reverse on the Tweety-and-Sylvester situation: Sweetie, fearing the inevitable, tries to end it all by allowing herself to be eaten by Furrball. However, Elmyra threatens Furrball with eviction from her home if he's found to be eating birds. The masters of the cat/bird chase them-

selves make a cameo appearance, in tribute to Friz Freleng.

"Li'l Sneezer" (S) 9/19/90 ** / D: Rich Arons / W: Stephen Langford, Paul Dini / Sylvester tutors Furrball in catching Li'l Sneezer the mouse.

"Lifestyles Of The Rich And Rotten" (S) 9/26/90 *** / D: Art Leonardi / W: Rowby Goren / Babs and Buster, doing their best Robin Leach imitations, interview Montana Max for a ritzy TV show, while Max sends Arnold after them.

"Little Cake Of Horrors" (S) 10/22/90 ** / D: Art Leonardi / W: Dale Hale / Dieting Hamton is tortured by a cake that says "Eat Me."

"The Looney Beginning" (A) 10/29/90 **** / D: Glen Kennedy, Dave Marshall, Ken Boyer, Rich Arons / W: Paul Dini, Sherri Stoner / Buster and Babs Bunny create the Acme Acres gang and setting to save a cartoonist's job. An ample introduction to the series, characters, and setting (which premiered as a special on CBS in primetime on September 14, 1990). Glen Kennedy and his animators have a distinctively rubbery style which is seen to good effect in this episode.

"Love Among The Toons" (S) 11/6/90 *** / D: Kent Butterworth and Eddie Fitzgerald / W: Gordon Bressack, Charles M. Howell IV, and Eddie Fitzgerald / An overburdened Cupid Elmer (voice of Greg Burson) sends Concord to fill in for him, and his misaimed arrow makes Babs fall in love with Monty . Inspired by *Stupid Cupid*. Features a neat View-Master sequence of the *Tiny Toon* characters as 3-D puppets.

"Love Stinks" (S) 11/19/90 ** / D: Ken Boyer / W: Sherri Stoner / What if Chuck Jones had amnesia and couldn't keep the Road Runner and Pepe LePew series straight? The result might be something like this. Here, Calamity, hoisted on his own petard as usual, becomes covered with tar and falls into feathers, which form a white stripe on his back. In rushes ever-amorous Fifi (whose downright sexy voice is provided by Kath Souci). So now he has to keep Fifi at bay while pursuing Little Beeper. A weak ending strips one star from what would be a three-star cartoon.

"Migrant Mallard" (S) 10/17/90 ** / D: Rich Arons / W: Tom Minton / Plucky Duck avoids flying south for the winter. Same situation previously explored in the cartoon *Daffy's Southern Exposure*, directed in 1942 by Norm McCabe, 48 years later a timing director on this particular episode of *TTA*.

"Milk, It Makes A Body Spout" (S) 2/22/91 ** / D: Rich Arons / W: Tom Minton, Tom Ruegger / Buster and Plucky argue over who is funnier. To settle it, they decide that the funniest one is whoever can make Hamton laugh hard enough to squirt milk out of his nose. Buster imitates Acme Loo teachers; Plucky does a really gross belching song. All three participate in a milk-flooded finale. This episode didn't prevent America's Dairy Farmers from buying their "Milk, it does a body good" spot in national broadcasts of the show on its original airing.

"Miniature Goof" (S) 10/30/90 *** / D: Kent Butterworth / W: Grant Moran, Tom Ruegger / Ruebella and Roderick build a free miniature golf course but exclude Buster and Babs from playing (though they do allow minorities, as noted in a restaurant sequence), so they assume the mannerisms of snobs. Moonlighting toons: Sylvester shows up briefly as a Notary Public and Porky as a cop.

"Mr. Popular's Rules Of Cool" (S) 12/10/90 ** / D: Art Vitello / W: Gordon Bressack / Mr. Popular (Buster) transforms Hamton into a cool dude.

"Never Too Late To Loon" (S) 9/19/90 *** / D: Rich Arons / W: Jim Reardon / Plucky tries to get Shirley to help him cram for a test by channeling the genius of Einstein into his brain.

"No Deposit, No Return Of The Trash Bag Dispenser" (S) 2/14/91 *** / D: Ken Boyer / W: Sherri Stoner / Plucky once more in the guise of environmental crusader, this time renamed from Toxic Revenger (possibly to avoid confusion with the *Toxic Crusaders* series); this time, he tries to stop Elmyra from polluting the lake. *TTA* treads on Captain Planet's turf in this short, demonstrating how to separate paper from glass from aluminum and turn them over to recycling centers.

"No Toon Is An Island" (A) 2/25/91 *** / D: Art Leonardi / W: Gordon Bressack, Charles M. Howell IV / The gang finds a treasure map, so they set sail aboard the "S.S. Tiny Tub" for an island, where the Green Eyed Monster awaits them. Cautionary tale about what happens when toons become consumed by greed.

"Oh For Art's Sake" (S) 2/6/91 ** / D: no director credited / W: Sherri Stoner / Plucky fakes artistic talent for Elmer Fudd's art class and is offered money for a painting he created merely by pausing real life with a VCR remote control. A bit on the abstract side; probably directed by Rich Arons. This and the two other cartoons dated 2/6/91 have very funny "Acme Home Shopping Network" wraparounds. The set for this show is almost the same as the one used by J.C. Penney Home Shopping Network.

"Open And Shut Case" (S) 12/7/90 *** / D: Gerard Baldwin / W: Tom Minton / Hamton is awarded a Wonder Locker but can't remember the combination when he locks his lunch in it.

"Optical Intrusion" (S) 9/18/90 *** / D: Art Vitello / W: Tom Minton / Furrball finds a pair of 3-D glasses that work too well, since they actually bring the objects that he sees crashing into his face. Unlike a certain Bugs Bunny cartoon from 1953, this cartoon has lots of good, meaningful 3-D footage.

"Out Of Odor" (S) 2/11/91 *** / D: Art Leonardi / W: Arleen Sorkin, Beth Milstein / Elmyra wants to keep Fifi as a pet cat, but is only minorly discouraged when she learns Fifi's a skunk. Co-writer Arleen Sorkin is better known as the hostess of *America's Funniest People.*

"Paper Trained" (S) 10/4/90 ** / D: Rich Arons / W: Jim Reardon / Paperboy Buster tries to collect on Max's paper subscription.

"Pasadena Jones" (S) 10/10/90 ** / D: Art Vitello / W: Sherri Stoner, Wayne Kaatz / Buster stars in "Pasadena Jones and The Secret Of Life," a no-more-than-okay spoof of one of Spielberg's big moneymakers.

"Piece Of Mind" (S) 11/7/90 *** / D: Art

Leonardi / W: Jim Reardon / Wile E. Coyote hosts as Calamity's life flashes before his eyes.

"A Pigment Of His Imagination" (S) 12/4/90 *** / D: Rich Arons / W: Therese Naugle / Hamton Pig's imaginary friend turns out to be more obnoxious than his real friends.

"Pit Bullied" (S) 11/14/90 ** / D: "Alan Smithee" / W: Earl Kress / Sweetie turns to science to get Furrball to try to eat something else, like Arnold the pit bull dog.

"Pluck O' The Irish" (S) 2/11/91 *** / D: Art Leonardi / W: Paul Dini / Plucky and Hamton visit Cardio Vascular Castle in Ireland and face a banshee whose stare turns people to stone. Reminiscent of*Wearing of the Grin.*

"Plucky's Dastardly Deed" (S) 12/7/90 ** / D: Gerard Baldwin / W:Tom Minton / Plucky cheats on his Cartoon Calculus final exam, then dreams of being chased by a lynch mob of Foghorn Leghorns.

"Prom-ise Her Anything" (A) 10/8/90 **** / D: Ken Boyer / W: Paul Dini, Bob Carrau / The gang gets formal for the Acme Looniversity Junior Prom. Footage of Bugs from "Hot Cross Bunny" (the Danny Kaye scat number figures prominently) and Bugs, Daffy, and Mama Bear appear in cameos.

"The Raven" (S) 2/19/91 *** / D: Ken Boyer / W: Sherri Stoner, Paul Dini / Sweetie plays the title role in this cockeyed adaptation of the Edgar Allen Poe-m, read by Vincent Price. Don't expect a straight reading, but it's very hard to tell where Poe ends and Stoner-Dini begins.

"A Quack In The Quarks" (A) 9/17/90 *** / D: Art Vitello / W: Tom Minton / When showing two new charges, Frank and Ollie, around the Looniversity, Plucky Duck becomes embroiled in a space adventure, because Frank and Ollie are Martians. It's a safe bet that the names Frank and Ollie are inspired by Frank Thomas and Ollie Johnston, two of Disney's Nine Old Men who have become the studio's best latter-day chroniclers. Ollie is voiced by Carol Kane.

"Real Kids Don't Like Broccoli" (S) 2/4/91 *** / D: Kent Butterworth / W: Wayne Kaatz, Kent Zbornak / Buster, private eye of the future, is tracking down Babs's missing 'droid, defeating Max's army of evil 'droids with a computer virus. Buster and Babs appear as slightly older versions of themselves, with the difference most noticeable in Babs, here given a throaty Kathleen Turner/Jessica Rabbit voice (still provided by Tress MacNeille) and a sexy woman's body.

"Rear Window Pain" (S) 11/7/90 *** / D: Art Leonardi / W: Earl Kress, Jim Reardon / Bedridden Plucky sees lots of strange things through his binoculars.

"Rent A Friend" (S) 11/1/90 *** / D: Art Leonardi / W: Jim Reardon, Paul Dini / Rent A Friend sends Buster over to play with Monty. Monty's fall from the top of his building resembles Willoughby's in *The Heckling Hare.*

"The Re-Return Of The Toxic Revenger" (S) 9/27/90 *** / D: Art Vitello / W: Jim Reardon / When Montana Max siphons off the entire swamp to fill his swimming pool, it's up to Plucky in the guise of the Toxic Revenger to save the day. Plucky's guise as the Toxic Revenger is not unlike Daffy's Western alter ego, The Masked E-Venger.

"The Return Of Pluck Twacy" (double-length S) 2/20/91 ** / D: Eddie Fitzgerald / W: Eddie Fitzgerald / Plucky slips on a banana peel and imagines himself as Pluck Twacy, famous deteck-i-tive, searching for Shirley The Loon's lost aura. Almost literal remake of *The Great Piggy Bank Robbery* with guest appearances by Peter Lorre, Sloppy Moe from "Injun Trouble," and a variation of the sexy she-duck from *The Super Snooper.*

"The Return Of The Toxic Revenger" (S) 10/22/90 ** / D: Art Leonardi / W: Pamela Hickey, Dennys McCoy / Plucky as the Toxic Revenger investigates air pollution caused by Montana Max's hole factory. (Maybe Max bought the patents from the estate of Bob McKimson, who introduced the concept of portable holes in his 1955 one-shot *The Hole Idea.*)

"Robin Hare" (S) 2/8/91 *** / D: Art Leonardi / W: Gordon Kent / Buster and his merrie men (and Mary Melody too) vs. Max the Sheriff of Nottingham. Maid Babs saves the day.

"The Roches" (S) 2/20/91 *** / D: Ken Boyer / W: Sherri Stoner / Exactly what you'd expect: the singing Roches (Maggie, Terre, and Suzzy as themselves) depicted as Roaches, each with four arms, who show up in Hamton's kitchen to perform a concert. Cute entry about an immensely talented yet amazingly undersung vocal trio (though the musical material they were given could have been better). A parody of Roger Rabbit, voiced by Steven Spielberg, makes a cameo in the prologue.

"Rock 'n' Roar" (A) 10/5/90 ** / D: Art Vitello / W: Sheryl Scarborough, Jim Reardon, Kayte Kuch / Buster finds an egg; when it hatches, it's a Tyrannosaurus Rex.

"Sawdust And Toonsil" (A) 11/5/90 *** / D: Rich Arons / W: Gordon Bressack, Charles M. Howell IV / The circus comes to Wackyland, and the evil ringmaster is out to get Gogo Dodo, the world's last Dodo.

"Scent-imental Pig" (S) 11/14/90 *** / D: Eddie Fitzgerald / W: Eddie Fitzgerald / Hamton smells good enough to eat when hit by a bottle of fragrance developed by some mad scientists.

"Senserely Yours, Babs" (S) 10/3/90 *** / D: Ken Boyer / W: Sherri Stoner, Tom Minton / Babs must get her sense of humor back by sundown or she'll be a nerd forever. Babs as a humorless character is actually quite hilarious.

"Sleight Of Hare" (S) 10/11/90 ** / D: Art Leonardi / W: Tom Minton, Wayne Kaatz / Case of the missing prestidigitator: at Max's birthday party, Buster fills in after the hired magician quits.

"Slugfest" (S) 12/10/90 **** / D: Art Vitello / W: Jim Reardon / Jam-packed parody of Ninja Turtle fandom and anything else that gets in the way. The heavily-merchandised *Immature Radioactive Samurai Slugs* show (their names are Picasso, Warhol, Rockwell, and Grandma Moses) is Plucky's favorite. So Plucky and Hamton decide to become two more Slugs (naming themselves Sherwin Williams and Earl Scheib!) to help Elmyra kill slugs in her kitchen — but they wind up on the wrong end of her broom and escape into a Samurai Slugs stunt show with Slug archenemy The Iodizer (whose head is a canister of salt, voice of Jim Cummings). We later meet up with Sgt. Roach and his Cockroach Commandos, including Super Fly and Dung Beetle Bailey, in the most hilarious roster of throwaway characters since Clampett's rogues gallery in T*he Great Piggy Bank Robbery.* And we learn the lowest life form of all is a TV executive, who says "I just don't know until I see the Ratings." Closer: Hamton reminds us to "just say no to slugs."

"Squish" (S) 9/20/90 ** / D: Art Leonardi / W: Len Janson / Shirley The Loon tries to convince Dizzy Devil that it's, like, not a good idea to step on bugs. Shirley, voiced by former *Saturday Night Live* performer Gail Matthius, is, like, one of those characters you wish they'd do more with, and some junk.

"Starting From Scratch" (A) 9/28/90 ** / D: Ken Boyer / W: Wayne Kaatz, Tom Ruegger / Various furry Toons are bedeviled by fleas, so Babs, Buster, and the gang shrink themselves to flea size to deal with them.

"Superbabs" (S) 10/10/90 ** / D: Art Vitello / W: Sherri Stoner, Tom Minton, Wayne Kaatz / Babs as a super-heroine. One of three lukewarm film parodies framed by Babs and Buster's movie date.

Teddy Bears Picnic" (S) 2/6/91 ** / D: Rich Arons / W: Paul Dini / The Three Bears atend the company picnic, where Paw and Junyer compete in father-and-son picnic games. This is one you could imagine Chuck doing much better. Highlight: Cree Summer as Elmyra sings the title song, which had been heard in WB cartoons as far back as the 1930s.

"Tennis The Menace" (S) 10/30/90 *** / D: Kent Butterworth / W: Gordon Bressack, Charles M. Howell IV / Montana Max stages a tennis tournament and invites only lousy players (including The Bookworm) so he can win.

"That's Incredibly Stupid" (S) 11/6/90 ** / D: Kent Butterworth / W: Chuck Menville / Plucky and Dizzy go on one of those anything-for-money game shows.

"To Babs Or Not To Babs" (S) 2/8/91 *** /

D: Art Leonardi / W: Paul Dini / Actress Babs auditions for William Shakespeare himself. Another Tress MacNeille tour de force, with Babs working through many voices and ultimately spending a great deal of the reel dressed as Elvira, Mistress Of The Dark.

"To Bleep Or Not To Bleep" (S) 9/19/90 ** / D: Rich Arons / W: Sherri Stoner, Paul Dini / Fowlmouth tries to clean up his language. Bleeps aplenty make this a bill-reader's delight.

"TT: Music Television" (A) 2/1/91 **** / D: Art Vitello / W: Sherri Stoner, Paul Dini, Tom Minton, Art Vitello, Bruce Timm, Douglas McCarthy / Music video show featuring videos for "Istanbul, Not Constantinople" and "Particle Man" by They Might Be Giants (both showcasing Plucky), "Respect" by Aretha Franklin (featuring Babs), "Money (That's What I Want)" by Barrett Strong (naturally, Max), and a parody of "The Sorcerer's Apprentice" sequence from *Fantasia* wherein Buster, weary of working under Bugs' supervision, programs the *Tiny Toon* computer for his own fanciful adventures. Bonus: one of MTV's two Julie Browns — the buxom, redheaded one — provides her own voice for a very funny (and all too brief) parody of her *Just Say Julie* show.

"Turtle Hurdle" (S) 11/8/90 *** / D: Kent Butterworth / W: Earl Kress, Tom Ruegger / A turtle attempting to cross the highway tries to get help from Michigan J. Frog. Epilogue: Buster recommends not crossing busy highways and shows us Elmyra's brain, which is nonexistent. Michigan doesn't work as a character unto himself rather than just the enigmatic singing frog in the cornerstone; using him like just another Looney Tune character is ill-advised.

"Venison Anyone?" (S) 12/10/90 ** / D: Art Vitello / W: Charles M. Howell IV / Hunter Max is thwarted by Vinnie, a smartass deer who talks street jive. An attempt was made to ban all guns from the series, but this rare exception in which Monty hunts with a rifle got through, and Vinnie reminds us that we shouldn't be playing with guns anyway. Vinnie is like when other studios would try to come up with lunatic animal characters like Bugs Bunny and fail miserably.

"A Walk On The Flip Side" (S) 10/3/90 *** / D: Ken Boyer / W: Michael Reaves / Max experiences life as a rabbit. Some potentially frightening images in this short might scare away little kiddies; parental guidance suggested.

"Waste Deep In Wackyland" (S) 2/14/91 *** / D: Ken Boyer / W: Jim Reardon / Gogo finds Monty's dumping his garbage in Wackyland. There are cameo appearances by Sherri Stoner (a mermaid who Gogo catches while fishing but throws back!) and the zooming WB shield. Those under the age of twelve should ask their parents to explain who Phil Spector is to understand the "wall of sound" gag. As Gogo, Frank Welker does impressions of Raymond Burr and Bill Cosby, among others.

"The Weird Couple" (S) 10/22/90 *** / D: Art Leonardi / W: Len Janson / Sitcom spoof, complete with laugh track, with Hamton and Dizzy Devil in the Felix and Oscar roles.

"Whale's Tales" (A) 11/26/90 *** / D: Kent Butterworth / W: Nicholas Hollander / Elmyra adopts a baby whale whose mother was trapped by Gotcha Grabmore and is about to be made into cosmetics. Lots of nice Disneyesque framing establishing the relationship of the two whales. Gotcha's assistant Octavius is voiced by *Saturday Night Live* regular Phil Hartman.

"What's Up Nurse?" (S) 11/20/90 *** / D: Gerard Baldwin / W: Stephen Langford / Plucky fakes illness to get out of class and is sent to Nurse Elmyra. June Foray as Granny, and in the prologue to the cartoon, Stan Freberg reprises his role as Pete Puma, who has become the Acme Loo janitor.

"Whining Out" (S) 10/4/90 *** / D: Rich Arons / W: Paul Dini, Bob Carrau / The gang dines out at a toney restaurant called Attitude; Babs does her Cher imitation. Buster and the other toons are at their best when up against stuffed shirts such as the restaurant's maitre d'.

"Who Bopped Bugs Bunny?" (A) 12/14/90 *** / D: Kent Butterworth / W: Paul Dini, Earl Kress, Sherri Stoner / Bugs Bunny disappears from a French film awards ceremony, so the Tiny Toons investigate when a likely suspect is found in Sappy Stanley (guest voice Jonathan Winters), an arrogant elephant jealous of Bugs's fame. Includes footage from *Knighty Knight Bugs*, and Stan Freberg is heard as Pete Puma (still a janitor). The most *Mighty Mouse*-esque episode of the series in concept, design, and personnel; contributing alumni from the short-lived but beloved Bakshi series, besides director Butterworth, include Eddie Fitzgerald, Mike Kazaleh, and John Kricfalusi. Winters is great as the smarmy Stanley.

"Wild Takes Class" (S) 11/15/90 **** / D: Art Vitello / W: Paul Dini / Bugs instructs the class on basic takes like the Avery Aaooogah, the Friz Frizzle, and the Chuck Out Of Luck Pathetic Eyes Routine. Daffy's class is more advanced; naturally, ambitious Plucky would rather emulate his mentor's approach, so he finds himself stuck in a take that turns him into a giant eyeball (the Clampett Corneal Catastrophy). The various takes are animated in the styles of the directors they're named for, though Avery's wild takes are more indicative of his MGM days.

"Win Lose Or Kerplowie" (S) 9/18/90 *** / D: Art Vitello / W: Gordon Bressack, Charles M. Howell IV / Montana Max bribes a game show host in order to win.

"Working Pig" (S) 11/13/90 *** / D: Art Leonardi / W: David Cohen, Roger S. Schulman / Hamton works in a department store, his supervisor sounding not unlike Frank "Yeeeesssss?" Nelson, and he has to sell something to Elmyra, who wants to buy something but she doesn't know what. Features parodies of Smurfs and Transformers. ■

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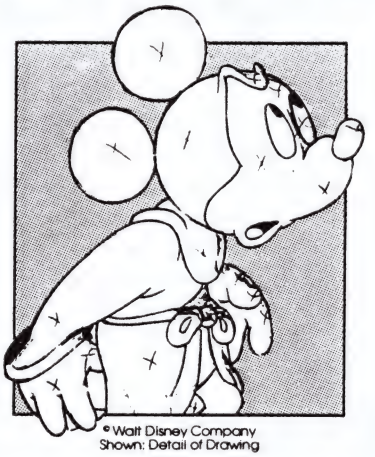

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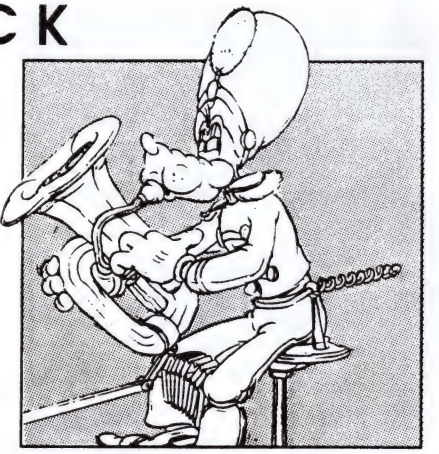

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Jim Korkis's Animation Anecdotes

A Column of Tidbits and Trivia

Welcome

Among many other activities, I have been writing animation anecdote columns for a variety of publications since 1976. Currently, one of my columns appears in every issue of *Animation* magazine. I hope I'll be able to contribute a brand new column to each issue of *Animato* as well. A publisher has expressed some interest in putting together a book of these anecdotes, and I'll share more information on this with you as soon as something happens.

Speaking of books, I have been fortunate to coauthor two books on animation with my friend, business associate, and writing partner John Cawley. *The Encyclopedia of Cartoon Superstars* and *How To Create Animation*, both from Pioneer Books, are available in stores now. If you have any interesting animation anecdotes you'd like to see in future columns, please feel free to send them to me in care of *Animato*.

Smurf Violence

Peyo, the creator of the Smurfs, discovered that television standards and practices eliminated one aspect of his popular comic strip. "I had to do away with a trademark of most stories: the bespectacled Smurf who hits the moralizing Smurf on the head with a mallet as soon as the moralizing begins," commented Peyo. "That couldn't be shown on TV, I was told, because the little spectator [watching at home] could very well go into his father's garage, take a hammer, and hit his sister on the head with it."

Getting the Credit

In animation, it is sometimes hard to determine credits, because too often they are not listed correctly. For example, Tim Bugard storyboarded sections of three different episodes of *The Simpsons*, but only received onscreen credit for one episode. Jack Hannah only worked on the Harecules Hare segments for *Beany and Cecil*, and yet is credited with working on the entire series. Comic-book artist Mike Royer did some work on superhero animated cartoons in the mid-1960s, but because he was a freelancer and not a staff person, he received no credit.

The latest credit mixup I've run across concerns the UPA Dick Tracy series. Mel Blanc is credited with doing the voice of Go Go Gomez, the stereotyped Mexican detective, but according to animation writer Mark Evanier, Blanc only provided the voice for the pilot episode. Paul Frees did the voice on the one hundred or so other cartoons, and yet it is Blanc that is still credited with the voice of the character.

Supervisor? Director!

I once asked Warner director Bob Clampett why some of the early Warner Bros. cartoons used the term "supervisor" instead of a direction credit. Clampett replied, "Leon Schlesinger called his directors 'supervisors,' which I believe he took from Irving Thalberg, who called his key filmmakers at MGM 'supervisors.' I think Leon was smart enough to know that if he called people 'supervisor' that the audience would think that the supervisor was just the bookkeeper or the pencil lead dispenser. So when Leon went to the racetrack, they'd say, 'Hey, that was a great cartoon you drew last night, Leon.' And he'd just smile.

"Remember, in those days people thought that Walt Disney did everything himself, from drawing the animated cartoons to the comic strip to everything else. Sometimes even people in the business didn't know who was doing what. It has only been in recent years that some of these talented people have started to get credit for their work."

Just Swimmingly

Jodi Benson, the voice of Ariel the mermaid in Disney's animated feature *The Little Mermaid*, has told reporters that Disney is working on a sequel but that "it won't be until 1993-1994 at least." Benson has been keeping busy recreating Ariel on the Disney children's album *Sebastian and Friends*, and provides the voices for princesses in two other animated projects. She is Princess Arabella in the holiday video *Why Christmas Trees Aren't Perfect*, and she's Princess Tula in Hanna-Barbera's *Dark Water*. "It's a sci-fi adventure series — sort of a futuristic Pirates of the Caribbean," says Benson.

Disney's Secret

"That was the secret of Walt," said animator Ward Kimball in a mid-1970s interview. "He didn't do the stuff with his tongue in cheek. When he did *Flowers and Trees*, which had a tragic ending, he was sincere; he believed in it. And when he did *Snow White*, he was completely serious. And to this day, the picture makes people cry when Snow White dies. The new generation sits there sobbing in their Kleenex. And this is something that's very hard to do with a cartoon — because after all you are exaggerating and caricaturing and the tendency is to do a put-on. Not Walt! I think that was his secret."

Felix's First Interview

In May, 1926, Felix the Cat supposedly gave his first interview, to writer Edwin Gallinagh for the magazine *Paris and Hollywood*. Felix was asked to what he attributed his great success. "Hard work, simple living, and Pat Sullivan, my director," the cat replied. "He makes one live his parts. I am sure that I could never continue my screen work so successfully under any other director. My one ambition is to give the screen my own interpretation of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. My life is my work. I intend doing bigger and better things."

For a silent screen star, Felix sure knew how to put his foot in his mouth, by not mentioning Otto Messmer, who was his true creator and the animator and writer of the Felix cartoons for Sullivan.

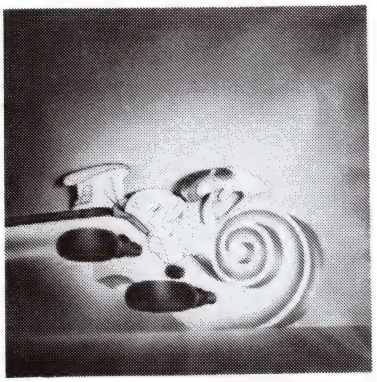
The Wedding Vow

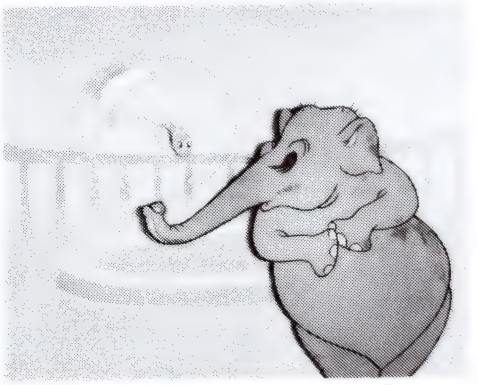
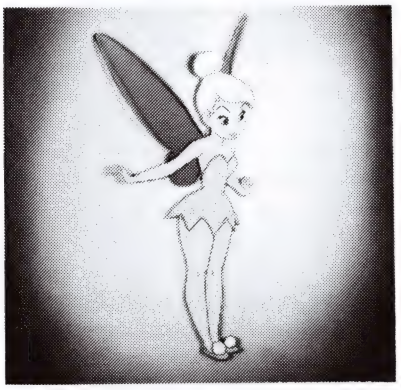
Animator Mark Mayerson was gracious enough to point out to me the very unique wedding vows of John and Faith Hubley. John Hubley had a long and varied career in animation, from work at Disney to time spent at UPA to work as an award-winning independent animator. Reportedly, when the Hubleys married, their wedding vows included the stipulations that they would always make at least one independent film a year and that they would always have dinner with their children.

An Inspiration

Paula Abdul, the popular singer and dancer, got together with her idol, Gene Kelly, for an Annie Leibovitz photo session for the pages of *Vanity Fair*. Abdul claimed to know every one of Kelly's movies by heart, and said she used his 1945 film *Anchors Aweigh*, in which he dances with Jerry Mouse, as the inspiration for her *Opposites Attract* video, in which she dances with an animated cool cat. ■

VINTAGE ANIMATION ART



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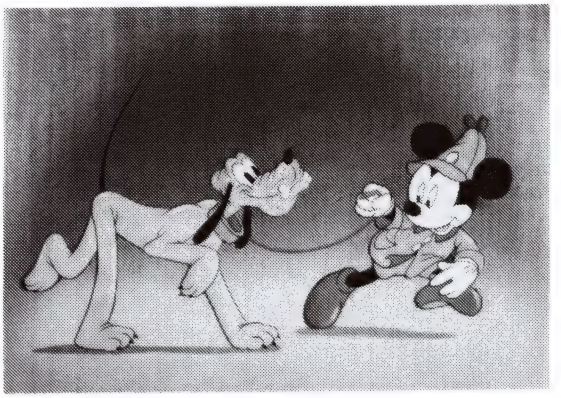

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A Video Column by Matthew Hasson

The Complete, Uncensored Private Snafu, Volume One
Bosko Video (60 minutes)

This is the first of two volumes that will include the complete series of Private Snafu army training films, produced by Warner Bros. for the Army Signal Corps during World War II. Although several Snafu shorts have previously shown up on public-domain video collections and cable shows such as *Night Flight,* the quality of prints has usually been pretty poor. They probably were taken from old 16mm prints of the *Army-Navy Screen Magazine*. Bosko Video has uncovered pristine, first-generation prints of the series, some of which have not been seen since the war. Even the ones which are not of first-generation quality are superior to those which have appeared on previous collections. The soundtracks also have a much cleaner sound, and are recorded in hi-fi.

But what really makes this collection a winner for film purists is that all the prints have been "matted down" to the proper film frame size for television. Most classic cartoons on TV are shown "as is," with part of the picture spilling over the border of the TV image. Many people don't realize how much of the picture they are missing, unless they read the title credits and see names that are cut off at the edge of the screen. (For instance, *Inside Termite Terrace, Volume Four* has the title card of *Hold Anything* reading "Old Anything.") Some MGM and Warner Bros. videos use matting for the titles and credits, but the rest of the cartoons are shown oversize.

Private Snafu, Volume One has a thin grey border surrounding the film image, which has been reduced in size to just below that of your TV screen, so that no part of the picture gets cut off. Bosko Video has also taken the extra step of superimposing the director's name at the beginning of each film, as no credits were ever given in the originals. On the down side, they also superimpose their logo at random points during each film, just as TV stations do with their station I.D.s.

Snafu, Volume One opens with a printed prologue by Mike Barrier that runs about two minutes (much longer than it takes to read, by the way). It gives some interesting information on the making of the series and on the people who created it, most notably Frank Capra and Ted "Dr. Seuss" Geisel. The films run in the order of their release, beginning with *Coming...Snafu!,* which is actually a promotional trailer that introduces the character and runs only about 2-1/2 minutes. Snafu is voiced by Mel Blanc with a Brooklyn accent and sounds a lot like Bugs Bunny, although in this opening film his voice is higher-pitched.

Even though these films are almost fifty years old and deal with a war that was over before most of us were born, watching these cartoons while the gulf war was still actively going on gave them a lot more meaning. The soldiers in that war had to live by the same rules as Snafu; to make a mistake in battle can mean death. To drive the point home, that is exactly what happens to Snafu in almost all of these films. He is smashed by a Japanese tank in *Goldbrick,* leaving him with a nice goldbrick tombstone. In *Spies* he is literally blown to hell by Nazi U-boats, and meets the devil in the form of Hitler himself. In *Booby Traps,* he is blown to heaven by an exploding piano, only to find that heavenly harps explode as well (especially when playing the last note of "Those Endearing Young Charms," a favorite Friz Freleng gag).

Snafu does not get blown away in every film, but there is an important safety lesson to be learned in each one. Another topic covered is leaking vital information to the enemy, as in *Spies* and *Going Home. Gripes, Infantry Blues,* and *The Home Front* deal with Snafu's frustration as a lowly private relegated to peeling potatoes, marching endlessly through mud, and manning lonely outposts in the frozen north. In many of these situations he is visited by a cigar-chomping "Fairy Godsergeant.." He waves a magic wand and shows Snafu a vision of an alternate future in which Snafu is in charge of the Army base. Of course, with Snafu in charge things degenerate into anarchy in no time, and the base is overrun by the enemy. After waking up from this nightmare, Snafu goes back to peeling potatoes with a vengeance.

Snafu films were made to entertain as well as teach. They all have the distinctive touch of zaniness that permeates all Warner Bros. cartoons, as well as some adult, risque humor. Characters say "hell" and "damn" quite often, and there are even some nicely-drawn topless mermaids in *A Lecture on Camouflage* that are even better than the centaurettes in *Fantasia*.

Overall, *The Complete, Uncensored Private Snafu, Volume One* is a great compilation that really panders to collectors with its well-researched cover notes, quality, size-corrected prints, and hi-fi sound. I'm looking forward to volume two.

Inside Termite Terrace, Volume Four
Bosko Video (87 minutes)

This latest in the series is somewhat lacking in rarities compared with previous entries, but is still a tasteful collection, consisting mainly of Merrie Melodies with one-shot characters. It opens with Bosko in *Hold Anything,* which consists primarily of singing and dancing with no plot (as do most of the early Warner Bros. cartoons). Bosko goofs around on a construction site with a bunch of Mickey Mouse lookalikes. Later on in the film, he accidentally decapitates one of them with a saw.

Three black-and-white Merrie Melodies are included: *Freddy the Freshman; Crosby, Columbo, and Vallee;* and *One More Time,* the last featuring Foxy, another Mickey Mouse clone with little points on his ears and a bushy tail. The remaining entires are color Merrie Melodies: *Let It Be Me, Robin Hood Makes Good, Bars and Stripes Forever,* and *Pigs In a Polka.* Rounding off the collection are *Case of the Missing Hare* and *To Duck Or Not To Duck* with Bugs and Daffy, respectively. Nothing rare about the last two; I suppose no Warner Bros. cartoon would be complete without "star" characters. Also included as a bonus is *Outpost,* a Private Snafu cartoon that isn't included in *Private Snafu, Volume One* (although this one isn't "matted"), and a live-action short subject titled *Harry Von Zell and Harlow Wilcox at NBC Studios.* This takes us behind the scenes at NBC radio to see the faces of then-famous radio actors, including footage of a young Mel Blanc doing Porky Pig. The fact that Porky is the only voice he demonstrates might date this film from earlier than 1945, the date that it stated on the box. By that time, Bugs and Daffy had surpassed Porky in popularity.

Though it does not rank quite as high as the first three volumes, *Inside Termite Terrace, Volume Four* still has some collectible stuff on it. ■

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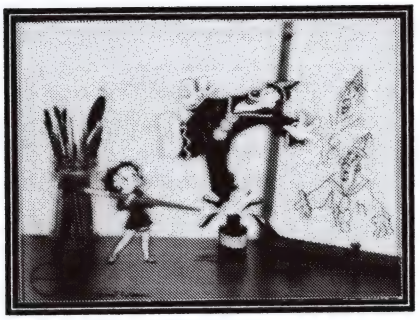

"OUT OF THE INKWELL," Circa 1931
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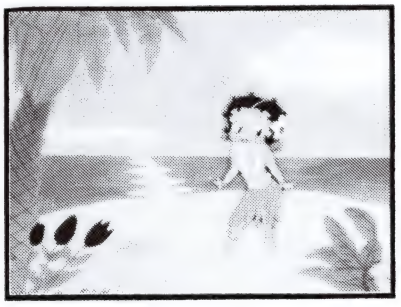

"BAMBOO ISLE," Circa 1932
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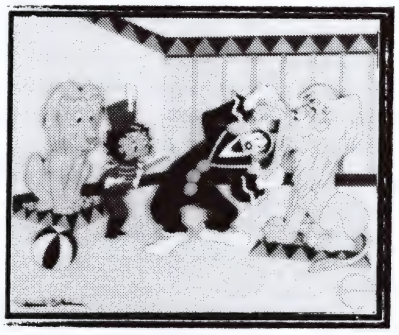

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The Carl Stalling Project
Music From Warner Bros. Cartoons, 1936-1958
Warner Bros. Records
Reviewed by Dave Mackey

The Bugs Bunny Looney Tunes 50th Anniversary Special, first broadcast in early 1986, included a brief throwaway gag of bronze god Billy Dee Williams stating that when he's with a woman and wants to set a romantic mood, he puts on a Carl W. Stalling album. He demonstrates by playing a rapidfire cacophony of musical flourishes and sound effects off of a record album — *Carl Stalling's Greatest Hits, Volume 6.* Not exactly music for dancing in the sheets. Funny gag, let's go on to the next one.

But that gag stuck in a lot of craws, including those of Hal Willner (music coordinator for the special) and John Zorn, both of who had admired Stalling's music for years, and wondered if a real Stalling album would be feasible. Almost five years later. the comedy bit could be resurrected as an actual commercial for *The Carl Stalling Project: Music From Warner Bros. Cartoons, 1936-1958.* (The album, not surprisingly, is on Warner Bros. Records.)

When Lorne Michaels was producing the aforementioned special back in 1985, an associate remembered Hal Willner's affinity for cartoons during his days as a *Saturday Night Live* musical supervisor, and asked him to compile the music for the show. Willner (aided by WB cartoon producer Kathleen Helppie) was able to gain access to a number of music-only soundtracks (some with sound effects) found by film editor Rick Gehr in the Warner vaults, since Warner's produced soundtracks without voices for dubbing into foreign languages. Willner later used this music for the soundtracks of two shorts and a feature produced by the Warner cartoon department, and even took some of it home just to listen to for his own entertainment. Now, he's shared these basement tapes with us, with the help of John Zorn, who has never been ashamed of crediting Stalling as a primary musical influence.

Before Carl Stalling, Warner Bros. cartoons had to put up with standard 1930s-type cartoon music, composed by Frank Marsales during the Harman-Ising years, and by the team of Bernard Brown and Norman Spencer afterward. But as the art of animation matured (especially as it was practiced at Termite Terrace), its music needed to follow suit. Enter Stalling, who had worked for Walt Disney, Ub Iwerks, and Ted Eshbaugh, who was not twenty-something like the animators he now worked for, but a seasoned veteran at 48. He was no stranger to matching music to onscreeen action, since he had been an organist for silent movies in his teen days back in Kansas City.

Some may argue that Stalling was in the upper echelon of cartoon music composers merely because he had three hours of recording time for each six minute short, regular access to a fifty-piece orchestra maintained by a big motion picture studio, and free access to several major catalogues of popular music. But it's not the tools that matter, it's what you make with them. Stalling was a master carpenter, one of only a handful of men who worked primarily in short subjects deserving of that platitude (others include Stalling's MGM counterpart, Scott Bradley, boogie-woogie man Darrell Calker at Lantz, and Marvin Hatley of the Hal Roach Studios — but those are other albums, or should be).

On this album, the early montages indicate that it took a couple of years for Stalling's music to reach full flower, since at first it was saddled by the last vestiges of the old Warner policy of using cartoons to plug scenes from the big studio's features. It wasn't uncommon for an angelic-sounding female trio to coo songs like *I Wanna Woo* right in the middle of a cartoon's slapstick action.

Clips from the war and postwar years reflect a Stalling freed from shilling, no longer needing to play 32 bars of anything straight to keep the music publishers happy, and even parodying his now-legendary musical shorthand for a Tex Avery reel called *Porky's Preview.* Also added was the influence of composer/bandleader Raymond Scott, author of such favorite Stalling quotations as *Powerhouse* and *Dinner Music for a Pack of Hungry Cannibals.*

The 1950s montage features the mature Stalling style, with many abrupt changes in tempo, style, orchestration, and mood — all within seconds, designed to match the onscreen lunacy crafted by Jones, Freleng, and McKimson. Stalling worked only from the directors' sketches and pretimed action, and not from finished animation, which makes his work, oftimes the perfect marriage of sight and sound, all the more remarkable.

Technically, it's the complete music scores from Stalling's later years, without sound effects and voices, that make the biggest impression, sounding robust even on cassette. There's much listening pleasure to be derived from *Stupor Duck* (a bonus track on the cassette version only) and *There They Go-Go-Go!* (both 1956), and from *To Itch His Own* (the final Stalling score, from 1958). (The soundtrack to *There They Go-Go-Go!* has some sequences out-of-order when compared to the cartoon itself — possibly some last-minute shuffling from Chuck Jones when the cartoon was in post-production?)

There are also some raw sessions with Stalling and his musicians striving for the perfect take of sections of music from *Putty Tat Trouble* (1951) and a bit of Liszt from a cartoon identified only as "Production No. 1425" that is actually Liverace's piano number from *Wideo Wabbit* (1956). One is reminded of the patient-but-demanding piano teacher, but with the roles strangely reversed as conductor/protege coaxes the proper rhythm of *The Hungarian Rhapsody* from pianist/mentor Stalling.

Some of the older cuts are a little rough (but still listenable), including the complete

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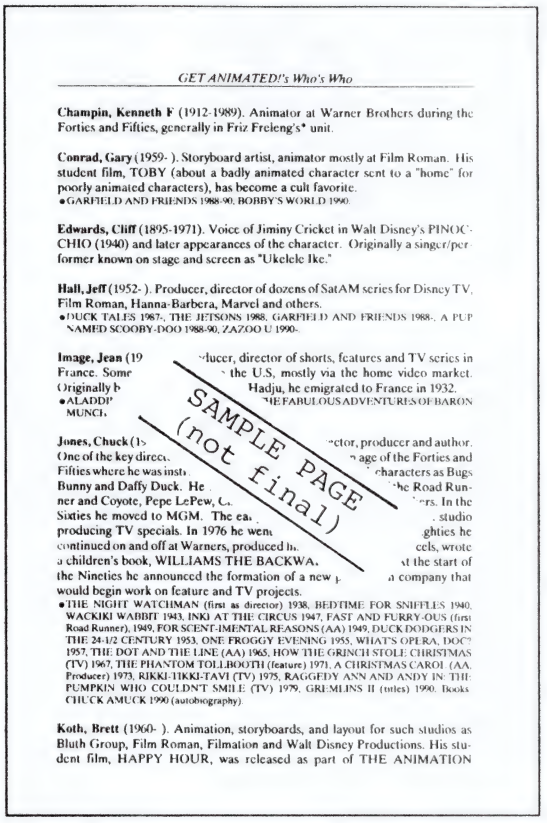

GET ANIMATED!'s Who's Who

Champin, Kenneth F (1912-1989). Animator at Warner Brothers during the Forties and Fifties, generally in Friz Freleng's* unit.

Conrad, Gary (1959-). Storyboard artist, animator mostly at Film Roman. His student film, TOBY (about a badly animated character sent to a "home" for poorly animated characters), has become a cult favorite.
• GARFIELD AND FRIENDS 1988-90; BOBBY'S WORLD 1990.

Edwards, Cliff (1895-1971). Voice of Jiminy Cricket in Walt Disney's PINOCCHIO (1940) and later appearances of the character. Originally a singer/performer known on stage and screen as "Ukelele Ike."

Hall, Jeff (1952-). Producer, director of dozens of SatAM series for Disney TV, Film Roman, Hanna-Barbera, Marvel and others.
• DUCK TALES 1987-; THE JETSONS 1988, GARFIELD AND FRIENDS 1988-; A PUP NAMED SCOOBY-DOO 1988-90; ZAZOO U 1990-.

Image, Jean (19 ...ducer, director of shorts, features and TV series in France. Some ... the U.S., mostly via the home video market. Originally b... Hadju, he emigrated to France in 1932.
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Jones, Chuck (1... ...ector, producer and author. One of the key direct... ...n age of the Forties and Fifties where he was instr... ...characters as Bugs Bunny and Daffy Duck. He ... ...he Road Runner and Coyote, Pepe LePew, C... ...rs. In the Sixties he moved to MGM. The ea... ... studio producing TV specials. In 1976 he went ... ...ghties he continued on and off at Warners, produced h... ...cels, wrote a children's book, WILLIAMS THE BACKWA... ...at the start of the Nineties he announced the formation of a new ... ...a company that would begin work on feature and TV projects.
• THE NIGHT WATCHMAN (first as director) 1938, BEDTIME FOR SNIFFLES 1940, WACKIKI WABBIT 1943, INKI AT THE CIRCUS 1947, FAST AND FURRY-OUS (first Road Runner), 1949, FOR SCENT-IMENTAL REASONS (AA) 1949, DUCK DODGERS IN THE 24-1/2 CENTURY 1953, ONE FROGGY EVENING 1955, WHAT'S OPERA, DOC? 1957, THE DOT AND THE LINE (AA) 1965, HOW THE GRINCH STOLE CHRISTMAS (TV) 1967, THE PHANTOM TOLLBOOTH (feature) 1971, A CHRISTMAS CAROL (AA, Producer) 1973, RIKKI-TIKKI-TAVI (TV) 1975, RAGGEDY ANN AND ANDY IN: THE PUMPKIN WHO COULDN'T SMILE (TV) 1979, GREMLINS II (titles) 1990. Books CHUCK AMUCK 1990 (autobiography).

Koth, Brett (1960-). Animation, storyboards, and layout for such studios as Bluth Group, Film Roman, Filmation and Walt Disney Productions. His student film, HAPPY HOUR, was released as part of THE ANIMATION

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score from 1939's *The Good Egg,* with the rendition of *Ho-Dle-Ay, Start the Day Right* under the main credits which were lost when the cartoon later became a Blue Ribbon reissue. On the minus side, there is an editing error on the opening cut from *You Ought to Be in Pictures* (1940) that begins with a Looney Tunes opening theme that wasn't recorded until 1941. The ensuing cuts from *Porky's Preview* include a vocal blackface rendition of September in the Rain that seems to have been taken from a public-domain print, possibly to include Mel Blanc's voiceover. And the liner notes misspell the Fleischer brothers' last name, and at one point give Stalling's middle initial as S. (He was credited with his middle initial through the mid-1940s.)

Despite the extra track on the cassette version, the compact disc (sorry, no vinyl release) is worth owning for its more complete documentation, including extra comments by Executive Producer Greg Ford and additional illustrations, including animation backgrounds, photographs of Stalling and his orchestra, and a Virgil Ross animation drawing from the Steve Schneider collection. Just for fun, the dialogue transcription sheet from *Stop, Look and Hasten* (1952) — a Road Runner cartoon —is also included, although the dialogue consists primarily of "Beep Beep" over and over. Ford, longtime animation scholar and co-writer/director of some of the newest Warner Bros. cartoons, is right on target when he argues that the music of Carl Stalling is an end in itself as well as means to an end. And to those who might ask why the score from, say, *Duck Amuck* or any of two dozen other classics wasn't included, Ford only had about 250 scores to choose from and weighted the score's musicality (and availability) higher than the reputation of the cartoon it accompanied.

Both the CD and cassette versions include three more essays, one each by Zorn, Willner, and Dick Blackburn, all attributing the decline/death of the Hollywood cartoon to Stalling's retirement in 1958. Though I won't go quite that far, I will say that after Carl Stalling left the scene, cartoon Melodies weren't quite so Merrie. This first album (more are to follow) cements his place in history.

Saturday Morning, 1990-1991
Reviewed by Frank Strom and Dave Mackey

(We asked veteran Animato *contributor Frank Strom and newer contributor Dave Mackey to comment on this season's network TV animation offerings.)*

Frank: I returned to the old homestead on Friday night after a particularly sumptuous feast at Foo's Cantonese Pleasure Pit & Takeout. Before I even had a chance to get a tall, cold one out of the icebox, the telephone began to howl. As the fates would have it, it turned out to be the *Animato* editors. It had been a long time since I had heard from them, so there must be some dirty work afoot — after all, when did they ever call to shoot the breeze? No, there was some thankless task to be done, and I was their man. *Animato* needed a report on the Saturday morning lineup. As I said, a thankless task...

Dave: I'm at the age when I can reach out and touch my thirtieth birthday, so you can probably guess what sort of stuff I grew up on in the 1960s and 1970s. I haven't been too sympathetic towards the Saturday morning scene for several years now, thanks to the growing reliance on license characters and presold concepts.

But the quality of Saturday morning shows, which hit rock bottom somewhere around the time of Strawberry Shortcake and her sickening friends, has improved to the point where I can sit down and enjoy some of these series. Chalk it up to enthusiastic artists fresh out of art school, who grew up on substandard stuff and would like to do better for the next generation of kids.

Bobby's World (Fox, 8:00am EST; Film Roman)

Frank: Based on some Howie Mandel routine, I'm told. *Bobby's World* is nothing new — a series about a very young boy with an overactive imagination who dreams a lot. If you've seen Bill Watterson's *Calvin and Hobbes* comic strip, then you've seen this concept explored in more depth. If you've seen Chuck Jones's Ralph Phillips shorts, then you've seen it realized by far more talented humorists. *Bobby's World* suffers from a running problem with most of this season's cartoons: it could be vastly improved by tightening the show into two 12-minute stories rather than one unfocused half-hour plot.

Dave: I think this series will be a hit for the ten-and-under set, since Bobby, created and voiced by comic Howie Mandel, appears to be of the same intellectual and emotional bent. TV fans will note the presence of Jim Staahl (who played Nelson Flavor on *Mork and Mindy*) on the show's writing staff, as well as musical director John Tesh. Watch it with your kids.

The Wizard of Oz (ABC, 8:30am; Ruby-Spears)

Frank: I'd thought that this was an English dub job of the Japanese *Wizard of Oz* series, but it turns out that it's a new series based on the film. Maybe "based on" is a little to light to describe this cartoon: visually, the series matches the film to the smallest detail, which is a real treat if you love the movie. The Wicked Witch returns to plague the Emerald City, now lorded over by the Scarecrow, Tin Man, and Cowardly Lion. With the Wizard wafting around the globe in his balloon and unable to aid our heroes, Dorothy is called back to Oz to help fend off the evil witch and her winged monkeys. The voices closely match those of the original actors, the animation is serviceable, and you get a song in every episode! This one's definitely worth programming your VCR for, if not actually getting up for.

Dave: I'm not terribly impressed, though some of it looks pretty. It starts off with two strikes against it, by being based on one of the most glorious movies of all time. Animated versions of Oz have traditionally not done well. Why mess with tradition?

Zazoo U (Fox, 8:30am; Film Roman)

Frank: I'm told that *Zazoo U* is Fox's attempt at creating a hipper, more cutting-edge *Sesame Street* for slightly-older kids. It's cool, it's hip, it's MTV, man. After watching ten minutes of the show, you realize that you haven't a clue as to what this show is supposed to be about. The only thing I learned from *Zazoo U* is that I had missed the first half-hour of *All-Star Wrestling*. The lure of Bruno Sammartino beckons...

Dave: This show reaches out and grabs you with its offbeat design, which is as removed from the traditional as has ever been seen on television. One of animation's elder statesmen, Bill Littlejohn, animated the main titles, and some episodes were directed by Warner Bros. animators Norm McCabe and Tom Ray.

Tom & Jerry Kids Show (Fox, 9:00am; Hanna-Barbera)

Dave: Yet another resurrection of the old MGM standbys. It's much better than H-B's 1975 T&J series, but nowhere near what Bill and Joe were capable of in the glory days. Good scripts, largely by cartoon veteran Jim Ryan (*Pink Panther* theatrical cartoons) cry out for better execution in the animation.

Rick Moranis in Gravedale High (NBC, 9:30am; Hanna-Barbera)

Frank: Rick Moranis is a school principal

at this school for teenage monsters...vampires, werewolves, gorgons, and so on. Personally, I felt this concept was too close to my own high school days to qualify as entertainment. Remember *Mad Monster Party? Groovie Ghoulies?* Maybe *Drac Pack*? If so, you know what you're gonna get here. In an effort to be a little more socially-relevant than its predecessors, *Gravedale High* tries to deal with the problems of teenagers. Big mistake. The only thing that puts this cartoon on the map is that it features the great vocal talents of *Twin Peaks'* Kimmy ("Lucy") Robertson.

Dave: Monsters, SCTV spinoffs, and offbeat high schools have all been done to death, rendering this series useless. I'd rather see Moranis reprising his original role over in *The Real Ghostbusters*, wouldn't you?

Attack of the Killer Tomatoes (Fox, 9:30am; Marvel Productions)

Frank: Remember the two (soon to be *three*) live-action films? Same thing, only here the tomatoes can talk. Looks like it's been farmed out to Korea. Is it any wonder? What I do wonder about is how *Addams Family* star John Astin could be so hard up for work that he would take a voice job on this bowzer.

Dave: Now, this is the sort of thing I'd expect from Fox. This series, while lacking in animation finesse, is saved by its absurd premise and irreverent scripts. Could be the cult show of the year.

Piggsburg Pigs (Fox, 10:00am; Ruby-Spears)

Frank: Being the tough-but-fair guy that I am, I decided to give the Fox network one more chance to redeem itself. They blew it. This very paint-by-numbers show is loosely based on *The Three Little Pigs*. So loosely, in fact, that the rather simplistic premise isn't readily apparent until about ten minutes in. *Piggsburg Pigs* commits the one unforgivable sin of having absolutely no personality at all. Oh, it tries to be clever, but doesn't quite deliver. For example, two of the lead pigs are based on Jackie Gleason and Art Carney, which is nothing that hasn't been done better in everything from Warner Bros. shorts to *The Flintstones*.

Dave: For thirteen-year-olds who have fond, nostalgic memories of *The Get-Along Gang*. I couldn't sit through five minutes of this crud. When the "We'll be right back" bumpers before the commercials look better than the show, the show is in trouble. Coproduced by Fred Silverman.

Kid 'N Play (NBC, 10:00am; Marvel Productions)

Dave: This show reminds me a lot of the old *Jackson 5ive* series. Rappers Kid 'N Play aren't MC Hammer, but they'll do for NBC's purposes. With live-action wraparounds and pro-social messages. Not terribly bad.

New Kids on the Block (ABC, 10:30am; DIC)

Frank: It'd be too easy to just pummel this cartoon mercilessly. Way too easy. Sure, it's awful, but what did you expect? It's virtually identical to every other cartoon you've ever seen based on a pop group or celebrity. I'm convinced that they're just rewriting old *Harlem Globetrotters* cartoons...or *The Monkees*. While *New Kids* looks like it was done by Hanna-Barbera in 1972, it is in fact from DIC...in 1990. The more things change...

Dave: A live-animated hybrid, with lots of footage of the real Kids to please their adolescent followers. I don't even know whyI'm reviewing this with all the other animated shows (or reviewing it for this magazine, rather than for *Teen Beat*). If it were an all-animation show, it would be a pretty poor excuse for one.

Bill & Ted's Excellent Adventures (CBS, 11:00am; Hanna-Barbera)

Frank: Well, hot damn! Here's a *good* one! I had my doubts about whether a *Bill & Ted* cartoon could have any real merits, but that was all dispelled within the first five minutes of this little beauty. Based on the clever time-travel/comedy film of the same name, *Bill & Ted* is off to a fine start. In the first episode, the boys break an antique Chinese vase belonging to Bill's stepmom,

Cartoon by Mark Marderosian

and travel back to ancient China to replace it. They end up getting arrested and put to work building the Great Wall of China. There are all sorts of funny incidents along the way, including the boys inventing Chinese take-out food.

Dave: CBS's only all-new Saturday morning series this season (*Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* is a crossover from syndcation) features the voices of Alex Winter, Keanu Reaves, and George Carlin, all of who appeared in the original movie. This is a most outrageous series, dude, with lots to keep fans of the original movie pleased. It's the best new entry on any of the three big networks.

Little Rosey (ABC, 12:00pm; Nelvana)

Dave: This series features the adventures of Roseanne Barr as a little girl. Canadian actress Kathleen Laskey (whom you may remember as daffy cashier Marlene Wimaraner on the live-action series *Check it Out!*) voices the title character. In one baseball-related episode, Little Rosey claims she can spit and scratch with the best of them. Given the real Barr's National Anthem escapade this past summer, that alone was worth a few chuckles. This show isn't as bad as I thought it would be. It's pretty good, in fact. Barr and husband Tom Arnold are Executive Producers.

Dangaio* and *Gunbuster
(U.S. Renditions videotapes, $34.95 each)
Reviewed by Christopher Tennaro

U.S. Renditions, a subsidiary of Nippon Shuppan Hanbai USA, Inc., has released these two original animation videos (or OAVs) from Japan. In reviewing both tapes, I wondered whether to concentrate on the translations or the videos themselves. Since both aspects are of interest, I shall cover each separately.

First, the translations. *Dangaio* and *Gunbuster* are subtitled and unedited versions of the original Japanese videos. Frankly, I didn't know what to think of the idea. My concern was that the captions would obstruct the action, since the action in Japanimation moves at such a breathtaking pace. Fortunately, U.S. Renditions has given us quite legible computer-generated subtitles that seem to fairly represent the action on screen.

Only on occasion did I find the dialogue confusing. Fortunately, since these are videos, they can be screened over and over again for clarity. I am now convinced that this is the best method for faithfully bringing Japanimation to the States. $34.95 apiece is a reasonable price for such films.

My only criticism of U.S. Renditions' first releases is that these videos are apparently the first installments of continuing OAV series. One wonders if all the future chapters will also be subtitled and released. Running time for these videos fall short of an hour. How about translating theatrical releases, which are generally over two hours in length, and also provide a complete story? Now, that would be a bargain!

Although *Dangaio* and *Gunbuster* were distinctly made for direct video sales, each is episodic in nature. Both begin with a teaser, opening credits, story, and finally closing credits. Both stories contain mature situations, and a standard cover letter accompanies each video, explaining the content.

The videos' animation differs from broadcast Japanimation most notably in its character animation. The eyes regularly blink, and the jaws occasionally move. Most importantly, the figures are more fluid in motion.

Dangaio is an old-fashioned giant-robot story. The story opens interestingly enough with a teenage girl named Miya Alice, who awakens to find herself within a space station. Immediately, she is attacked by robot guards, on a satellite about to explode. She soon meets three other teenagers who all realize that they have two things in common: they can only remember their names, and each seems to have special ESP abilities.

This interesting beginning diminishes as the mystery of who they are is quickly resolved. After successfully abducting four Danfighter spaceships, they flee from the space pirates who wanted to exploit their powers. Naturally, the Danfighters combine to transform into the giant robot Dangaio! At first, the linkup is unsuccessful, but when it comes time to defend Miya Alice's native Tokyo from another giant robot on the rampage, they are able to rise to the occasion and defeat the enemy.

Dangaio features likable character designs, but the mecha robots and spaceships are so bizarre and abstract that one is never sure what one's looking at. In addition, the dialogue is often rather juvenile and preachy. This video is for those who prefer strictly light fantasies.

Gunbuster starts, as *Dangaio* ends, with a surprisingly standard storyline. Our young heroine Noriko dreams of the day she can become a space pilot like her father, and travel to the stars with him. Her father tragically dies when his spaceship is presumably destroyed by a mysterious alien force. Now, more than ever, Noriko is determined to graduate from the Space Academy to avenge her father's death.

Cartoon by Mark Marderosian

The video actually consists of two separate episodes. The first follows Noriko as she struggles through the trials and tribulations of her first month in an all-girl academy. This episode too closely borrows from the Rocky theme in American films, as Noriko participates in a rigorous training program. Just picture her in her RX trainer robot jogging across a sandy beach at sunset, throwing punches in the air — doesn't quite work! But although Noriko is a bit of a crybaby, her spunk keeps the story alive. During her physical training, she can be seen belting out the count as she vigorously jumps rope. "198, 199, 200. Gosh, that's perfect!" she proudly exclaims.

The second chapter finds Noriko and Kazumi, a senior pilot, flying into orbit after being selected as the two best pilots from Japan. Here they meet with a competitive Soviet pilot who quickly befriends them after a friendly duel during training practices.

Gunbuster cleverly builds suspense, and leaps to an intense climax that kept me on the edge of my seat. The writing is clever, and the scenes are well staged. For any Japanimation fan, this is a must!

One thing I learned from these videos is that the Japanese borrow from American films as frequently as Americans borrow from the Japanese. Furthermore, Japanimation stories wander greatly, from silly situations to radically-adult themes. The flow often seems uncomfortable, and is not unlike that of some Disney and Bluth films. All in all, though, the Japanese offer stories one can find nowhere else, in a vivid animation style that's as exciting as the adventures these heroines are thrust into.

Captain Planet and the Planeteers
DIC Productions; TBS

Reviewed by Bob Miller

How do you determine which cartoons are worth watching?

Sometimes you can tell just from the show's title, if not its concept, without ever watching a single frame of celluloid.

Such is the case with *Captain Planet and the Planeteers*, a 26 half-hour series which premiered last fall on Superstation TBS and in syndication. Indeed, the series got its start from its title alone, when media mogul Ted Turner ushered Barbara Y. E. Pyle into his office, and wanted her to develop a series about a pollution-fighting superhero called "Captain Planet."

Yes, Captain Planet. How original. Never mind that heroes named "Captain" proliferate like the measles. Captain America and Captain Video and Captain Midnight and Captain Nice and Captain Power and Captain Caveman and Captain Cupcake — and now Captain Planet. Oh, boy.

The *Los Angeles Times* reported that Barbara Pyle created the concept of a group of children called the "Planeteers," each wearing a magic ring. Combined, these rings would summon Captain Planet to fight major threats to mankind such as — get this — Verminous Skumm, Dr. Blight, Looten Plunder and Duke Nukem. Sound menacing, don't they? With names like these, I doubt these villains will get any more respect than Rodney Dangerfield.

The bad guys, of course, are a "non-specific ethnicity." This is to placate those with the mentality that one villain represents an entire ethnic group. Can't risk offending anybody, these days.

Naturally, the five Planeteers are a racially-mixed bunch from different parts of the world. Each wears a ring with the power to control an element of nature — earth, air, fire, water, plus a new one, heart. Now, if one has those powers, why bother to summon Captain Planet? Who needs him?

Conversely, why do we need the kids? Basically, they serve as ciphers for our viewers to relate to. Young'uns are a mandatory fixture in cartoons these days, especially with junior versions of Scooby Doo, Flintstones, Muppets, and James Bond proliferating on the telly. But, if you were a superhero, would you want children tagging along? Would you risk endangering their lives when battling villains?

DIC Enterprises, the makers of *Captain Planet*, feels viewers will be impressed by the celebrity cast, with Whoopi Goldberg as Gaia; LeVar Burton as Kwami; Ed Asner as Hoggish Greedily; plus James Coburn, Jeff Goldblum, Meg Ryan, Charlie Sheen,

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and Sting as "polluting perpetrators."

Now, wait a minute. When you watch a cartoon character, do you watch because of the actor providing the voice? Do kids watch Bugs Bunny just to hear Mel Blanc, or because Bugs is a funny character? Is Donald Duck popular because he's voiced by a famous celebrity, or because he's Donald Duck?

The bottom line is, no matter who does the voice, if the character isn't appealing enough, the viewers will turn the channel to watch someone with more charisma. For instance, given the choice, who would you prefer to watch: Captain Planet, or Bugs Bunny?

Captain Planet has enlisted several "non-paid" consultants to "simplify" the complex issues of the environment: astronomer Carl Sagan, Greenpeace activist Peter Dykstra, and oceanographer Jean- Michel Costeau. A DIC exec said the show will teach children how they can protect the planet.

Perhaps it's laudable to have a cartoon series promoting ecology, but who will watch it? In the 1970s, the networks programmed "pro-social" shows for Saturday morning. Like *Captain Planet*, each production had technical advisors to make the shows educational and "safe" to watch. *Sealab: 2020* explored the ocean; *Korg: 70,000 B.C.* speculated on prehistory; *Yogi's Gang* battled antisocial misfits like Mr. Waste and Mr. Pollution (Hmmm, sounds familiar). Not surprisingly, kids tuned away from these shows in droves. They had had enough education for the week at school. As Joe Barbera has said, regarding cartoons, "They should leave education to the schools and the entertainment to us."

The pilot, "A Hero for Earth," opens with a giant "land blaster" grinding its way through a wildlife sanctuary. It's operated by that mean ol' stereotype Hoggish Greedily. We know he's the bad guy because he has fangs, an upturned nose, pointed ears, beady eyes, and a mohawk haircut; grunts, laughs at his own threats, and — like most TV cartoon villains — talks like his throat is congested. Greedily has the obligatory sidekick, Rigger, who's along so his boss won't talk to himself.

Greedily wants to drill for oil, even if it's in a wildlife sanctuary. "I'll be so rich I'll be in hog heaven," he oinks.

The machine drills through the earth and cracks the ceiling of the underground bedroom of Gaia, the spirit of Earth. Yes, even in the scientifically-advanced Space Age, Ted Turner's progeny embrace the mysticism of the Stone Age. She wakes up and is horrified to see the Earth is polluted. "The time has come for the rings," she concludes. She teleports "five special kids" to Hope Island. These "Planeteers" will be "the world's greatest hope" in fighting pollution.

Gaia doesn't bother consulting the kids' parents. Nor does she ask the kids if they want to go to Hope Island in the first place. She just interrupts their routines and off they go. Forget about school, family, friends. Let's go fight the bad guys. The kids agree, of course.

There's no time to give the rings an extended workout. Hoggish Greedily is polluting a beach and he has to be stopped! Gaia gives the kids a jet (they're in a hurry and she doesn't teleport them to the scene?) with which, miraculously, they are able to fly. Gaia is with the Planeteers "in spirit." If they get into trouble they can't handle, she tells them to combine their powers.

Greedily promptly sprays their jet with oil (over a long distance? Don't ask me how). "That'll teach them to interfere with the plans of Hoggish Greedily," he says as they drop to the sea.

Unfortunately, they don't crash. The kids manage to save themselves. Then Greedily threatens to spray the animals with oil if the Planeteers don't back off (even though the animals are *already* coated with oil!).

This is too much for our heroes. They combine their ring powers, which summons forth — Captain Planet! The heroes' hero, with crewcut hair, skin of blue, and toothpaste smile. Captain Planet! Hero of the environment, who leaves behind a trail of smoke as he flies.

Planet quickly rips the oil pipeline and creates a whirlpool that sucks the oil back into the hole (How? Don't ask me.), seals the hole and jams the pipe into a trash can! (How can a trash can support a 100-foot-long pipe without toppling over? Don't ask.) He grabs Rigger — "I know just the place for garbage like you" — and stuffs him into another trash can.

Then, Greedily sprays the Captain with toxic waste, which happens to be his weakness. "Ha-ha! No one defeats Greedily. No one!" But the girls fetch some water and clean him off. The sun recharges our hero just in time for him to wipe out the Greedily's machine. Naturally, Greedily gets away. "I'll be back, Captain Planet."

The kids assume mantra positions, and Planet returns to their rings — leaving the kids alone to clean up the animals. What a lazy superhero.

I've sampled other episodes to see if there's been any improvement, but no. The scripts continue to be laced with dialogue in which the characters state the obvious. In one story, the Planeteers' jet is iced up. Someone points out, "We're covered with ice!" Wheeler activates his ring (from the inside. Miraculously, the interior isn't scorched) and melts the ice. "Look! The ice is melting!" As Pee-wee Herman would say, "Duh!"

Idiot plots and lapses in logic also abound. In another episode, the kids are fighting a forest fire caused by the crash of a meteor. Oddly, Wheeler — whose ring controls fire — can't stop it. Gi can't drown it with water, Kwami can't bury it with dirt, and Ma-ti's heart power is just as useless. Linka tries to blow it out with wind — which, as any fireman could tell her, would only fan the flames to make it burn farther and faster. Not a bright idea for a Soviet who's supposed to be well-educated; or for Gaia, who could have warned her; or for that matter, the writer of this silly episode. And Carl Sagan — who is said to be a technical advisor on this series — apparently ignored the scientific sloppiness, or else the producers ignored his advice.

The production values are typical of a cartoon when you Do It Cheap. The animation is choppy. The timing of the movement is awkward. The characters' expressions don't match the vocal performances. The camera angles are less-than-dynamic. And the music is so-so. Now, how can Turner expect kids to watch a substandard show when the competition — Disney and Warner Bros. — is far superior and available at the touch of the remote control or VCR button?

Of course, Turner and DIC want you to at least sample their show. But, knowing what you do now about *Captain Planet and the Planeteers*, do you really want to?

Robot Carnival

Released by Streamline Pictures

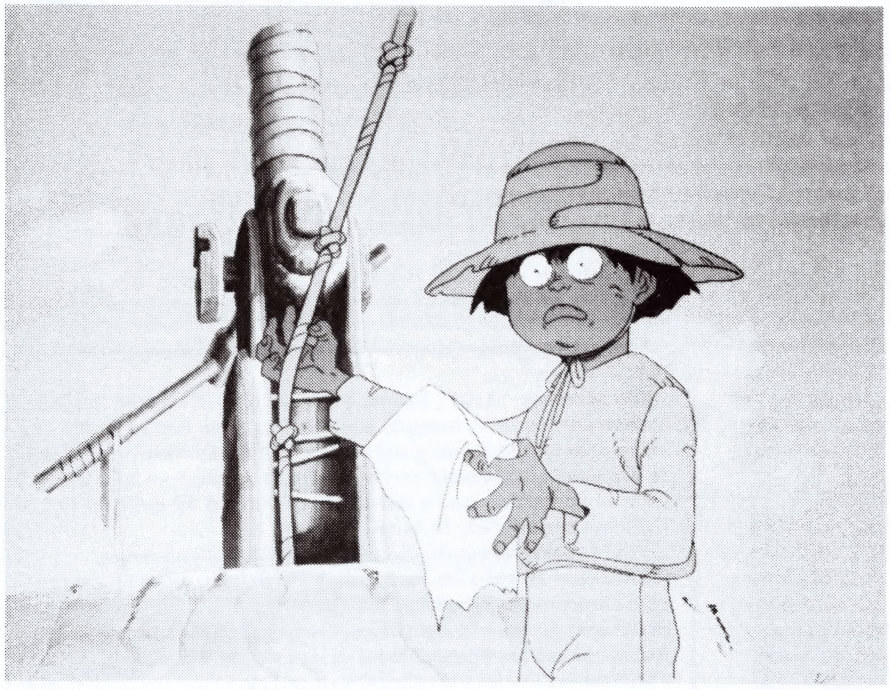
Reviewed by Emru Townsend

The notion of syncing a pantomime animated film to music is hardly new; Disney's *Steamboat Willie* and Silly Symphonies are classic examples, and even "silent" films usually had a pianist performing to accompany what was being seen onscreen. However, since the days of the Silly Symphony — and the ultimate Silly Symphony, *Fantasia* — there has been a profound lack of this genre of animated film, with the possible exception of music videos.

Enter *Robot Carnival*, a mid-1980s Japanese techno-*Fantasia* with a twist. Like

Fantasia , *Robot Carnival* is comprised of several animated shorts set to music. Unlike *Fantasia*, *Robot Carnival*'s segments are produced by different teams, each with their own distinct style, while all the music is composed by Jo Hisaishi, who has also composed soundtracks for anime classics such as *Nausicaa*, *Laputa*, and *Arion*. Where *Fantasia*'s unifying theme is fantasy, *Robot Carnival*'s unifying theme is, as the title suggest, robots.

In some ways, *Robot Carnival*'s structure is much like that of *Fantasia*. It gambols through some light-hearted sequences, takes time out for a relatively somber short, has a trio of shorts (one light-hearted, one "art," and one uproariously funny), and a final, dark sequence.



From Robot Carnival.

The film's opening has a little boy in the desert going about daily life until a poster ad blows his way. He picks it up, squints at the type, and runs off in a panic to warn the villagers: the Robot Carnival is coming! People frantically run for cover and cower in their hovels as the Carnival makes its destructive presence known. This segment was directed by Katsuhiro Otomo (creator and director of *Akira*) and Atsuko Fukushima (who worked on *Cobra* and *Lensman*), and is enjoyable for its large dollops of slapstick cartoon violence as the Robot Carnival's fireworks detonate within the village and its cancing dolls explode in the company of their human consorts.

"Franken no Haguruma" ("Frankenstein's Gears"), directed by Kouji Morimoto (of *Aura Battler Dunbine*), is set in a darkened laboratory illuminated only by the occasional flash of lightning. A (mad?) scientist with an unidentifiable something on his back creates a robot which can mimic anything he does. to his dismay. Further comment would give away the joke.

"Deprive," directed by Hidetoshi Omori (who has worked on *Dunbine*, and more recently the new *Guyver* videos), is a fast-paced action film. An invading overlord and his minions kidnap a young girl, and her robot friend sets off to rescue her from their clutches. Aside from the catchy music, a few neat visual effects during his retribution, and a particularly nasty surprise, there's nothing too exceptional about this segment.

Two of the shorts within this movie violate the music-only rule, of which the first is "Presence." Directed by Yasuomi Umetsu (who was behind the opening of *Project A-ko 3*), the film's subdued background music is mainly accompanied by the voice of the main character, a man who creates robotic toys for a living. The world he inhabits is much like ours, only robotics are more commonplace. In his private work area, he creates a robotic female companion, who startles him by exhibiting some all-too-human behavior. This touching film is hauntingly beautiful, with lush background designs and ultra-detailed, colorful cel work. The animation itself is smooth — almost too smooth. While it suits certain things, such as flying cars and slow-motion shattering glass, the smooth movement sometimes makes the characters themselves seem inhuman.

"Starlight Angel" is a short about two girls' visit to the fair. This is a light, entertaining, "feel-good" sort of film, which is fairly average. The story meanders a bit in some places, leaving the audience occasionally muttering, "Yes, yes, get on with it!" Hiroyuki Kitazume directed "Starlight Angel," which is highly reminiscent of his work for *Zeta Gundam*.

"Meiji Karakuri Bumei Kitan: Koumoujin Shurai no Maki" ("Strange Tale of Meiji Machines: The Episode of the Red-Haired Man's Invasion") is the second *Robot Carnival* short to have any dialogue. Strangely, the music seems to only be a minor aspect of this film, which is about a western man invading 16th century Japan with his giant, lumbering wooden robot. Some Japanese youngsters attempt to retaliate with a wooden robot of their own, with some hilarious consequences, like accidentally punting a small house into the stratosphere when they mean to raise the right leg to start walking. Hiroyuki Kitakubo, chief animator of *Black Magic M-66*, directed this bit of silliness.

"Cloud" sticks out from the rest of *Robot Carnival* as "Toccata and Fugue" in D Minor did in *Fantasia*; it's not cel animation. Unlike "Toccata," it doesn't even have much animation at all. *Cloud* has a quiet, contemplative soundtrack and features a small, robotic child wearing a jacket. Little happens in this as far as plot goes; most of the film is comprised of still drawings serving as a backdrop for the robot's journey. Mao Lamdo (*Urusei Yatsura*) directed this, probably the closest to an "art" film *Robot Carnival* has to offer.

"Niwatori Otoko to Akia Kubi" ("Chicken Man and Red Neck") owes quite a bit to *Fantasia*'s "Night on Bald Mountain." An ordinary city is overrun by demonic robots at night, and one man is trapped in it all. "Chicken Man and Red Neck" has a few slapstick moments, but is still generally a dark film. What it lacks in the sheer power and dark majesty of both the music and animation in "Night on Bald Mountain," it makes up with a frenetic pace and the terror of poor Chicken Man. This was directed by Takashi Nakamura, who later became chief animator of *Akira*.

The closing segment was directed by Katsuhiro Otomo and Atsuko Fukushima. The Robot Carnival is over, and the mobile sign/parade vehicle is in ruins. The ending is a funny and almost sadistic surprise; see the movie and judge it for yourself. ■

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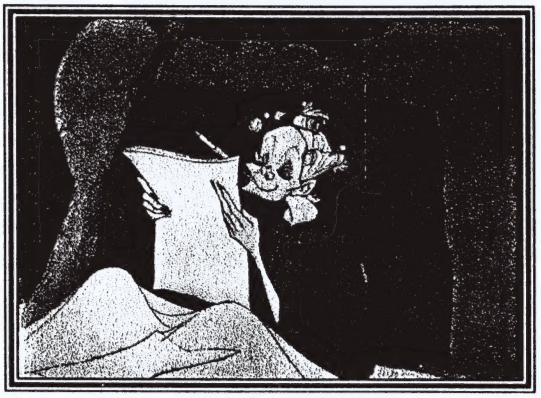

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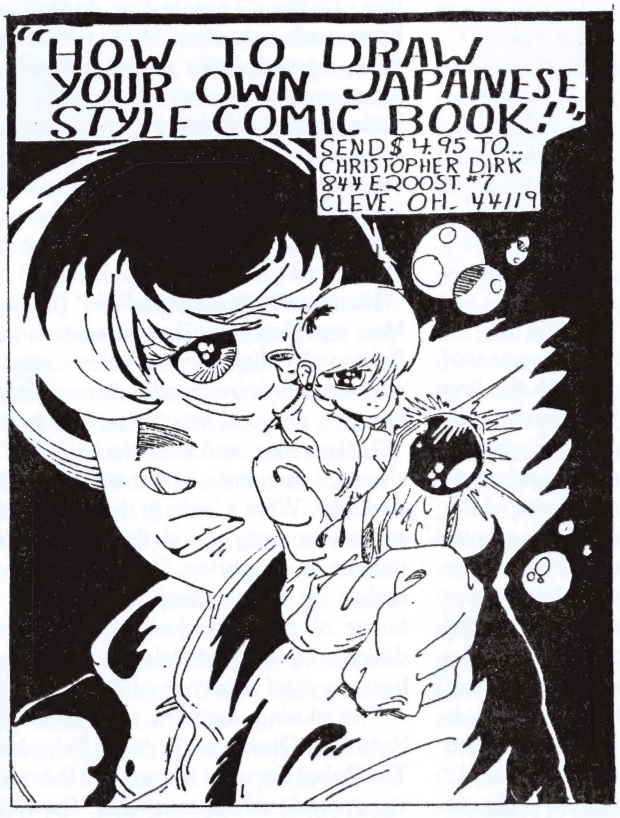

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These cartoons are all in black & white, the way they were made. This tape sells for $24.95 (($2.50 U.P.S.) If you have a P.O. Box, please give us a street address. UPS insures your orders, it is a pain with the post office.

We will be releasing Volume Five of our popular series, "Inside Termite Terrace" in March. These are all Warner Bros cartoons that were made in the 1930's and 1940's. ($24.95 + $2.50).

We were priviledged to film famed animator Grim Natwick's 100th Birthday. This was held last August 18th, and sponsored by Los Angeles ASIFA. The cream of animation society was there , and he was given tributes by Chuck Jones, Walter Lantz, Mae Questel and Marc Davis. Grim was the creator of Betty Boop, and animated Snow White in the Disney classic. This will also be released in March, with a portion of the proceeds going to ASIFA's cartoon restoration fund ($24.95 + $2.50).

We have just obtained EXCLUSIVE North American video rights to the RARE Ub Iwerks series, "Flip The Frog". This consists of thirty-eight cartoons, of which Grim was the chief animator, and Carl Stalling scored the music. Most will be transfered from the original negatives.

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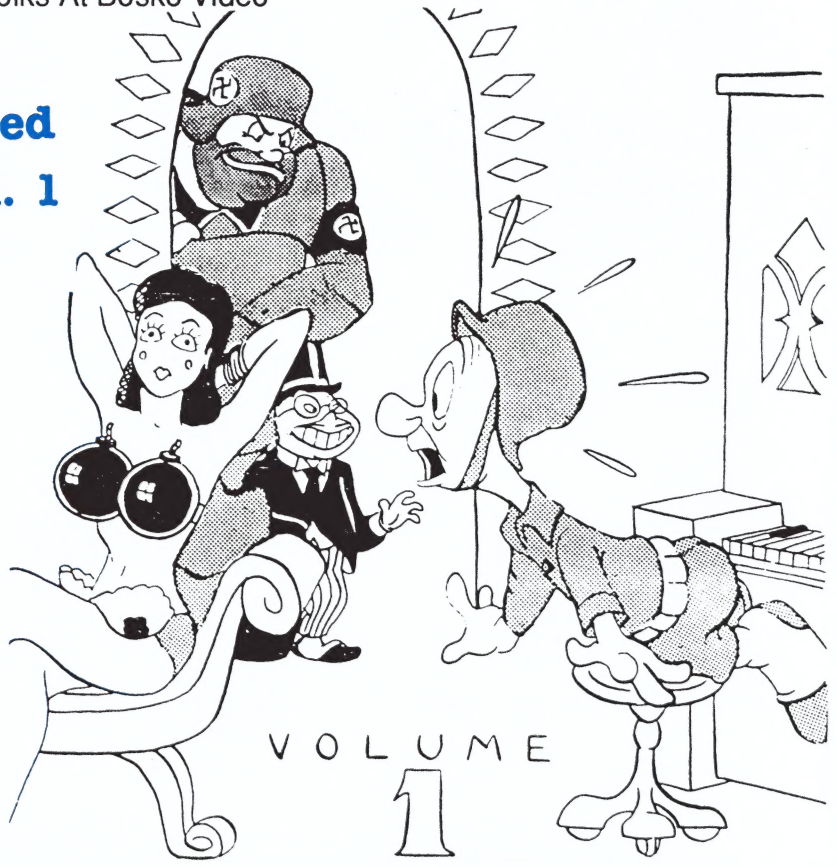

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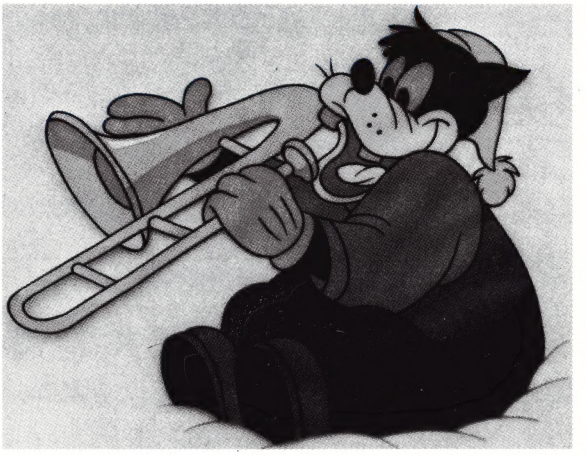
Hare-Abian Nights 1959
Hand Inked Production Cel of Yosemite on Camel on Warner Bros. Master Production Background $3350



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Trombone Trouble
Beautiful Hand Inked Cel of Black Pete Playing his Trombone. $900

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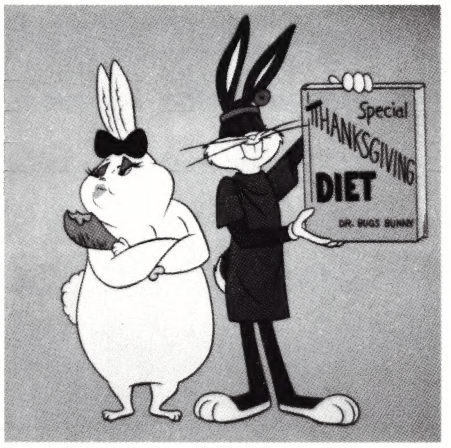

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Bugs Bunny and Millie from Bugs Bunny's Thanksgiving Diet, 1979
on Original Warner Bros. Production Background $2500

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Life with Tom, 1956
Hand Inked Cels on Original Background Layout $1400

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Early 1960's Yogi Bear with Picnic Basket
Hand Inked Production Cel on Original Hanna Watercolor Production Background $500

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